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THE

COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

IN EIGHT PARTS

THE

COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

THE TEXT NEWLY COLLATED AND REVISED
AND EDITED WITH A MEMOIR
AND NOTES BY

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

VOLUME SECOND

PART TWO

CAMBRIDGE
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MDCCCXCII

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THE CENCI

A TRAGEDY

IN FIVE ACTS

The Cenci was published, with Shelley's name, at London, in the spring of 1820 by C. & J. Ollier, in an edition of two hundred and fifty copies printed in Italy, probably at the press of Masi, at Leghorn. The drama was begun at Rome, by May 14, 1819, and continued at the Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn, where it was finished, August 8, and immediately revised for the Italian printer. It was meant to be put on the stage before publication, and is said to have been refused by Covent Garden and Drury Lane. A second edition was issued at London, in 1821, by Ollier, with the imprint of C. H, Reynell, the text of which embodies Shelley's corrections, published by Forman, and is to be received as standard.

DEDICATION

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

My dear Friend, — I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience ; they are dreams of what ought to be or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor and am content to paint, with such colors as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honorable, innocent and brave ; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil ; one who knows better how to receive and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive ; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners, I never knew ; and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you !

Your affectionate friend,

Percy B. Shelley.

Rome, *May* 29, 1819.

PREFACE

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children ; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind at the price of a hundred thousand crowns ; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.[1] Such a story, if told so as to present to the

[1] The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical

reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest ; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci.*

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept forever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, King Lear and the two plays in which the tale of Œdipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous ; anything like a dry exhibition of it on the

a demonstration of its own wickedness ; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly no person can be truly dishonored by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character. The few whom such an exhibition would have interested could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, — that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavored as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something un-

natural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days ; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit ; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge ; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death, this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation ; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.[1]

[1] An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime pas-

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly ; that is, without an overfastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted ; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter ; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavored whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art ; it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features ; she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate ; the eyebrows are distinct and arched ; the lips

sage in "El Purgatorio de San Patricio" of Calderon ; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another; her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of openwork. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, BERNARDO, } his Sons.

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

PRINCE COLONNA.[1]

ORSINO, a Prelate.

SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.

OLIMPIO, MARZIO, } Assassins.

ANDREA, Servant to CENCI.

NOBLES. JUDGES. GUARDS. SERVANTS.

LUCRETIA, Wife of CENCI and Stepmother of his children.

BEATRICE, his Daughter.

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

[1] PRINCE COLONNA, omit, Shelley, 1819, 1821.

THE CENCI

ACT I

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the* CENCI *Palace. Enter* COUNT CENCI *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.

CAMILLO

THAT matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point; he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI

The third of my possessions — let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle.

13 *As*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *So*, Shelley, 1819.

I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness — not the lamp — shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge,
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life — it angers me!
Respited me from Hell! So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven! No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue. — But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

CAMILLO

Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honorably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow-white and venerable hairs!
Your children should be sitting round you now
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?

25 *Than*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *That*, Shelley, 1819, 1821.
26 *me*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || omit, Shelley, 1819.
35 *you might*, Rossetti.

Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things
else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs ?
Talk with me, Count, — you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth,
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not ; I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood ; now
Do I behold you in dishonored age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI

For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian. Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter ;
He was accustomed to frequent my house ;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him ; and I smiled.
I think they never saw him any more.

CAMILLO

Thou execrable man, beware !

CENCI

Of thee ?
Nay, this is idle. We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime,
Seeing I please my senses as I list,

And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart,
For you give out that you have half reformed me;
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent,
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury;
All men enjoy revenge, and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel,
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's and that mine;
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish — and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know —
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

CAMILLO

Art thou not
Most miserable?

CENCI

Why miserable?
No. I am what your theologians call
Hardened; which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought, —

While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls. Ay, we must all grow old.
And but that there remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine — I'd do, — I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets.
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees, —
And I grew tired; yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth, —
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals —
The dry, fixed eyeball, the pale, quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO

Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me.
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA

My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

100 *And but that there*, Shelley Errata || *And but that there yet*, Shelley, 1821, *But that there yet*, Shelley, 1819.

CENCI

Bid him attend me
In the grand saloon.

[*Exit* ANDREA.

CAMILLO

Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.

CENCI

The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons,
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned. Then, as to Beatrice —

[*Looking around him suspiciously.*

I think they cannot hear me at that door.
What if they should? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O thou most silent air, that shalt not hear

131 *had*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *have*, Shelley, 1819.
140 *shalt*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *shall*, Shelley, 1819.

What now I think! Thou pavement which I tread
Towards her chamber, — let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent! — Andrea!

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA

My Lord?

CENCI

Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening: — no, at midnight and alone.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter* BEATRICE *and* ORSINO, *as in conversation.*

BEATRICE

Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation; nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress; two long years are passed
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of Mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

ORSINO

You said you loved me then.

BEATRICE

You are a priest.
Speak to me not of love.

ORSINO

I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?

BEATRICE

As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation, I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not. — Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no, forgive me; sorrow makes me seem

24 *thus*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *yet*, Shelley, 1819.

Sterner than else my nature might have been ;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode, — but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure ?

ORSINO

All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared ? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice ;
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

BEATRICE

Your zeal for all I wish. Ah me, you are cold !
Your utmost skill — speak but one word —
(*Aside*) Alas !
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend !

(*To* ORSINO)

This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino ; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees.
Great God ! that such a father should be mine !
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.

Poor lady! she expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition;
Till when — farewell.

ORSINO

Farewell.

[*Exit* BEATRICE.

I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition.
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration.
Old men are testy, and will have their way.
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love — a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me, nerve by nerve,

75 *vassal*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *slave*, Shelley, 1819.

And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts. — Ah, no! a friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope!
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III. — *A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter* CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

CENCI

Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honors our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST

In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumor pins on you.

[*To his companion.*

I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

SECOND GUEST

Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

CENCI

It is indeed a most desired event.
If when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard,
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment, —
Then honor me thus far, for I am he.

BEATRICE (*to* LUCRETIA)

Great God! How horrible! some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA

Fear not, child,
He speaks too frankly.

BEATRICE

Ah! My blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI

Here are the letters brought from Salamanca.
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead! — Why, dead! — What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not — I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food or raiment more;
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me — my heart is wondrous glad.

BEATRICE (LUCRETIA *sinks, half fainting;* BEATRICE *supports her*)

It is not true! — Dear Lady, pray look up.
Had it been true — there is a God in Heaven —
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

CENCI

Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;
And whose most favoring providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy;
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,

Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival,
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December.
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*

FIRST GUEST

Oh, horrible! I will depart.

SECOND GUEST

And I.

THIRD GUEST

No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though, faith!
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado.
'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

CENCI (*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*)

O thou bright wine, whose purple splendor leaps
And bubbles gayly in this golden bowl
Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,

Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph! — But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A GUEST (*rising*)

Thou wretch!
Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

CAMILLO

For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane.
Some ill will come of this.

SECOND GUEST

Seize, silence him!

FIRST GUEST

I will!

THIRD GUEST

And I!

CENCI (*addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*)

Who moves? Who speaks?

[*Turning to the company.*

'Tis nothing,
Enjoy yourselves. — Beware! for my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*

BEATRICE

I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! Oh, think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears
To soften him; and when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
And lifted up to God, the father of all,
Passionate prayers; and when these were not heard,
I have still borne, — until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain;
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.

104 *were* || *are* or *wear*, Rossetti conj.

Oh! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
Take us away!

CENCI (*he has been conversing with* CAMILLO *during the first part of* BEATRICE'S *speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances*)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters — or perhaps
Of their own throats — before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

BEATRICE (*not noticing the words of* CENCI)

Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law that ye deny my suit?
Oh, God! that I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! and that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

CAMILLO

A bitter wish for one so young and gentle.
Can we do nothing? —

COLONNA

Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy;
Yet I would second any one.

132 *no*, Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || *not*, Shelley, 1819.

A CARDINAL

And I.

CENCI

Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

BEATRICE

Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honor and obedience,
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream,
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill. Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step;
Seek out some dark and silent corner — there
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

CENCI

My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoiled the mirth of our festivity.
Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time. —

[*Exeunt all but* CENCI *and* BEATRICE.

My brain is swimming round.
Give me a bowl of wine!

(*To* Beatrice)

Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight!

[*Exit* Beatrice.

Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening, but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.

(*Drinking the wine*)

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well.
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear!

[*Exit.*

ACT II

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

LUCRETIA

WEEP not, my gentle boy; he struck but me,
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

BERNARDO

Oh, more, more
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep?

LUCRETIA

Alas! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done!

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE (*in a hurried voice*)

Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah, no! that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been

A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant

Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'Tis but Orsino's servant. — Well, what news?

SERVANT

My master bids me say the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened.
(*Giving a paper*)
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again?

LUCRETIA

At the Ave Mary.
[*Exit Servant.*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me,
How pale you look! you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were overstrong for you;
Your eyes have a chill glare; oh, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

BEATRICE

You see I am not mad; I speak to you.

LUCRETIA

You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse

Than when he smiled, and cried, "My sons are
dead!"
And every one looked in his neighbor's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong
words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence; your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence.
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

BEATRICE

What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody;
Yet never — oh! before worse comes of it,
'Twere wise to die; it ends in that at last.

LUCRETIA

Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber. — Speak to me.

BERNARDO

Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

BEATRICE (*speaking very slowly, with a forced calmness*)

It was one word, mother, one little word;
One look, one smile.

(*Wildly*)

Oh! he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs;
And I have never yet despaired — but now!
What would I say?

(*Recovering herself*)

Ah, no! 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild;
He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did, — nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty;
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

LUCRETIA

Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl.
If any one despairs it should be I,
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

BEATRICE

Talk not to me, dear Lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead mother plead against my soul,
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!

BERNARDO

And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, mother!

LUCRETIA

My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, *suddenly*

CENCI

What! Beatrice here!
Come hither!

[*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,

Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you — but in vain.

BEATRICE (*wildly staggering towards the door*)

Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

CENCI

Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you! From this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,

(*To* BERNARDO)

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BERNARDO.

(*Aside*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful. — 'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive;
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in —
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

LUCRETIA (*advancing timidly towards him*)

O husband! pray forgive poor Beatrice.
She meant not any ill.

CENCI

Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off.
Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? you said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses? This failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

LUCRETIA

So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!

CENCI

If you dare to speak that wicked lie again,
I'll kill you. What! it was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn

What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA

Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI

Blaspheming liar! you are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you;
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things — not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out; you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella;
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about;
Its dungeons under ground and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do
you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey!

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes.
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come, darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?

And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror; if there be a sun in heaven,
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her, then, wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me; I bear a darker, deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose. — Would that it were done!
[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter* CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

CAMILLO

There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing.

GIACOMO

Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,

Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require? —

CAMILLO

Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

GIACOMO

'Tis hard for a firm man to bear; but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father,
Without a bond or witness to the deed;
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope will interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law?

CAMILLO

Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young,

I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

Enter ORSINO

You, my good lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO

What words?

GIACOMO

Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me; at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink. — But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on their meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?

CAMILLO

Why, if they would petition to the Pope,
I see not how he could refuse it; yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.

GIACOMO

But you, Orsino,
Have the petition; wherefore not present it?

ORSINO

I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it — in truth they might well baffle
Any belief — have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal.
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO

My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
Has whispered silence to His Holiness;
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would —

[*Stops abruptly.*

ORSINO

What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover;
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves,
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree,
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile,
A father who is all a tyrant seems, —
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

77 *makes truth*, Shelley, 1821 || *makes the truth*, Shelley, 1819.

GIACOMO

Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words —
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

ORSINO

But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected —

GIACOMO

Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be — a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me that I say farewell — farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

97 *you are* || *thou art*, Rossetti.

ORSINO

Farewell! — Be your thoughts better or more bold.

[*Exit* GIACOMO.

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement.
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyze their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets; for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes.
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(*After a pause*)

Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered? — Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci; and, while Cenci lives,
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her. — O fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,

Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape;
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it; her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours.
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved;
And she! — Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success.
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts
Till it become his slave — as I will do.

[*Exit.*

ACT III

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.* LUCRETIA; *to her enter* BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*she enters staggering and speaks wildly*)

REACH me that handkerchief! — My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me —
I see but indistinctly.

LUCRETIA

My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow. — Alas, alas!
What has befallen?

BEATRICE

How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast. — Oh, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. — My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapors such as the dead breathe
In charnel-pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me — 'tis substantial, heavy, thick;
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues

My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!
(*More wildly*)
No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air!
(*A pause*)
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burden remains here
O'er these dull eyes — upon this weary heart!
O world! O life! O day! O misery!

LUCRETIA

What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not.
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.

BEATRICE (*frantically*)

Like Parricide —
Misery has killed its father; yet its father
Never like mine — O God! what thing am I?

LUCRETIA

My dearest child, what has your father done?

BEATRICE (*doubtfully*)

Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.

[*Aside.*

She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

(*To* LUCRETIA, *in a slow, subdued voice*)

Do you know,
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams
That I imagined — no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As —

(*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself*)

Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest — Mother!

LUCRETIA

Oh!
My sweet child, know you —

BEATRICE

Yet speak it not;
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,

59 *sweetest* or *know you not*, Rossetti conj.

Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me; from this point of time,
I am —

(*Her voice dies away faintly*)

LUCRETIA

Alas! what has befallen thee, child?
What has thy father done?

BEATRICE

What have I done?
Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be! — Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?

LUCRETIA.

He is a violent tyrant, surely, child;
We know that death alone can make us free;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

BEATRICE

'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak,
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not — something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done;
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now! — O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime and punishment
By which I suffer — no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die;
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

LUCRETIA

It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

BEATRICE

I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?

I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me; I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror — of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? for there is none to tell
My misery; if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death, death! our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward; oh, which
Have I deserved?

LUCRETIA

The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

BEATRICE

Ay, death —
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee unavenged — it shall not be!
Self-murder — no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it. — Oh! in this mortal world

There is no vindication and no law,
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO

(*She approaches him solemnly*)

Welcome, friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO

And what is he who has thus injured you?

BEATRICE

The man they call my father; a dread name.

ORSINO

It cannot be —

BEATRICE

What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

ORSINO

Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

140 *nor*, Shelley, 1821 || *or*, Shelley, 1819.

BEATRICE

Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare,
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a byword, an astonishment: —
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints — Oh, most assured redress!

ORSINO

You will endure it then?

BEATRICE

Endure! — Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
(Turns from him, and speaks half to herself)
Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

ORSINO

Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,

His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayest become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

BEATRICE (*to herself*)

Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter!

(*She retires, absorbed in thought*)

LUCRETIA

If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge —

ORSINO

Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime —

LUCRETIA

But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock with gold opinion, law and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? if, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? Oh, God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

ORSINO

Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA

How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not — but I think it might be good
To —

ORSINO

Why, his late outrage to Beatrice —
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonor, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge;
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel —

LUCRETIA

For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.

[BEATRICE *advances.*

ORSINO

Then —

BEATRICE

Peace, Orsino!
And, honored Lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,

Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is passed,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburdened soul,
And be — what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou thy friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

ORSINO

I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

LUCRETIA

You think we should devise
His death?

BEATRICE

And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

ORSINO

And yet most cautious.

LUCRETIA

For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

BEATRICE

Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?

ORSINO

I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

LUCRETIA

To-morrow, before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there —

BEATRICE

He must not arrive.

ORSINO

Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

LUCRETIA

The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE

But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,

Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour
Clings to the mass of life; yet, clinging, leans;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall; beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns; below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

ORSINO

Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until —

BEATRICE

What sound is that?

LUCRETIA

Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned — make some excuse for being here.

BEATRICE (*to* ORSINO *as she goes out*)

That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.

ORSINO

What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither; let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO, *in a hurried manner*

How! have you ventured hither? know you then
That Cenci is from home?

GIACOMO

I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

ORSINO

Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

GIACOMO

Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed,
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories

278 *hither*, Shelley, 1821 || *thither*, Shelley, 1819.

Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate
Under the penury heaped on me by thee;
Or I will — God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?

ORSINO

Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO

Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose;
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us

Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too; but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!" I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more,
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
I will, reversing Nature's law —

ORSINO

Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.

GIACOMO

Then — Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?

My wrongs were then less. That word, parricide,
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

ORSINO

It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it; what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

GIACOMO

Is he dead?

ORSINO

His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

GIACOMO

What outrage?

ORSINO

That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow, bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints, both self-misunderstood,
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth and yet to its revenge,

She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told, before she spoke it, he must die —

GIACOMO

It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! is there made
Ravage of thee? O heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

ORSINO

Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen;
All is contrived; success is so assured
That —

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE

'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?

GIACOMO

My sister, my lost sister!

BEATRICE

Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now stay not,
He might return; yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not — farewell.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II. — *A mean Apartment in* GIACOMO'S *House.* GIACOMO *alone.*

GIACOMO

'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.
(*Thunder, and the sound of a storm*)
What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep;
They are now living in unmeaning dreams;
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. Oh,
Thou unreplenished lamp, whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,

Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine;
But that no power can fill with vital oil, —
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold;
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death;
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat!

(*A bell strikes*)

One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet — 'tis Orsino's step.

Enter ORSINO

Speak!

ORSINO

I am come
To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO

Escaped!

ORSINO

And safe
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

GIACOMO

Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,
But my repentance.

ORSINO

See, the lamp is out.

GIACOMO

If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drunk this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink forever?
No, I am hardened.

ORSINO

Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

GIACOMO (*lighting the lamp*)

And yet, once quenched, I cannot thus relume
My father's life; do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

ORSINO

Once gone,
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor —

GIACOMO

Oh, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

ORSINO

There is no need of that. Listen; you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

GIACOMO

I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

ORSINO

Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

GIACOMO

Only to talk?

ORSINO

The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death; ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end.

GIACOMO

Listen! What sound is that?

ORSINO

The house-dog moans, and the beams crack; nought else.

GIACOMO

It is my wife complaining in her sleep;
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

ORSINO

Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly

Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

GIACOMO

If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands —

ORSINO

Why, that were well. I must be gone; good night!
When next we meet, may all be done!

GIACOMO

And all
Forgotten! Oh, that I had never been!

[*Exeunt.*

91 *may all be done!* Shelley Errata, Shelley, 1821 || GIACOMO: *May all be done, and,* Shelley, 1819.

ACT IV

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella. Enter* CENCI.

CENCI

SHE comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay; yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will,
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence; fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

LUCRETIA

Oh,
Husband! I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,

4 *not now*, Shelley, 1821 || *now not*, Shelley, 1819.

Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage; so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

CENCI

What! like her sister, who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

LUCRETIA

She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!"

CENCI

Why — such things are.
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favored from above,
For when I cursed my sons, they died. — Ay — so.
As to the right or wrong, that's talk. Repentance?
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well —
well —

I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

(*A pause;* LUCRETIA *approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks*)

One, two;
Ay — Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled; and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave;
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming; to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeathe
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments, and all records of my wealth;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of Him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure.

[*Going.*

LUCRETIA (*stops him*)

Oh, stay! it was a feint;
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI

That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA

Oh, to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

CENCI

Andrea! go, call my daughter
And if she comes not, tell her that I come.

(*To* LUCRETIA)

What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men;
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be — what? canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA

The Lady Beatrice —

CENCI

Speak, pale slave! what
Said she?

ANDREA

My Lord, 'twas what she looked; she said,
"Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass;
I will not."

[*Exit* ANDREA.

CENCI

Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent; and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

Ha!
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? for I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

LUCRETIA

She said, "I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us."

CENCI (*kneeling*)

God,
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil,
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If, nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

LUCRETIA

Peace, peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.

CENCI (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven*)

He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child —

LUCRETIA

Horrible thought!

CENCI

That if she ever have a child — and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! — may it be
A hideous likeness of herself; that as
From a distorting mirror she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast!
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery!
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural;
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonored grave!

136 *Peace, husband, peace!* Rossetti conj.

Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in heaven.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle;
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA

What? Speak!

LUCRETIA

She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul—

CENCI

She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both; first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee; and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! O thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain

Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel; and then —
O multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall, with a spirit of unnatural life,
Stir and be quickened — even as I am now.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the ramparts.*

BEATRICE

They come not yet.

LUCRETIA

'Tis scarce midnight.

BEATRICE

How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed Time!

LUCRETIA

The minutes pass.
If he should wake before the deed is done?

BEATRICE

O mother! he must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.

LUCRETIA

'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession! —

BEATRICE

Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO, *below*

LUCRETIA

See,
They come.

BEATRICE

All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*

OLIMPIO

How feel you to this work?

MARZIO

As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

OLIMPIO

It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.

MARZIO

Is that their natural hue?

OLIMPIO

Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

MARZIO

You are inclined then to this business?

OLIMPIO

Ay,
If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *below*

Noble ladies!

BEATRICE

Are ye resolved?

OLIMPIO

Is he asleep?

MARZIO

Is all
Quiet?

LUCRETIA

I mixed an opiate with his drink;
He sleeps so soundly —

BEATRICE

That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,

A dark continuance of the hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

OLIMPIO

We are resolved.

MARZIO

As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

BEATRICE

Well, follow!

OLIMPIO

Hush! Hark! what noise is that?

MARZIO

Ha! some one comes!

BEATRICE

Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *An apartment in the Castle. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

LUCRETIA

They are about it now.

BEATRICE

Nay, it is done.

LUCRETIA

I have not heard him groan.

BEATRICE

He will not groan.

LUCRETIA

What sound is that?

BEATRICE

List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

LUCRETIA

My God!
If he be now a cold, stiff corpse —

BEATRICE

Oh, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone;
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO

Is it accomplished?

MARZIO

What?

OLIMPIO

Did you not call?

BEATRICE

When?

OLIMPIO

Now.

BEATRICE

I ask if all is over?

OLIMPIO

We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin gray hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veinèd hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

MARZIO

But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, oh, hear
A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?"
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

BEATRICE

Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation; it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed, where mercy insults heaven —
Why do I talk?

(*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it*)

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

OLIMPIO

Stop, for God's sake!

MARZIO

I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO

Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

BEATRICE

Take it! Depart! Return!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

LUCRETIA

Would it were done!

BEATRICE

Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapor they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO

He is —

OLIMPIO

Dead!

MARZIO

We strangled him, that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

BEATRICE (*giving them a bag of coin*)

Here take this gold and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this!

(*Clothes him in a rich mantle*)

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state; so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent; this deed is none.

(*A horn is sounded*)

LUCRETIA

Hark, 'tis the castle horn: my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE

Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA

The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

BEATRICE

Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now;

The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm; all ill is surely past.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the Legate* SAVELLA, *introduced by a Servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

SAVELLA

Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

LUCRETIA (*in a hurried and confused manner*)

I think he sleeps;
Yet, wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile.
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till day break.
(*Aside*) Oh, I am deadly sick!

SAVELLA

I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA (*with increased agitation*)

I dare not rouse him, I know none who dare;
'Twere perilous; you might as safely waken

6 *a wrathful*, Shelley, 1821 || *wrathful*, Shelley, 1819.

A serpent, or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA

Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA (*aside*)

Oh, terror! oh, despair!
(*To* BERNARDO)
Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber.

[*Exeunt* SAVELLA *and* BERNARDO.

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE

'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA

Oh, agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means,
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact.
Oh, horrible, 'tis all discovered!

BEATRICE

Mother,
What is done wisely is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child,
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not.

(*A cry within and tumult*)

VOICES

Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter BERNARDO *and* SAVELLA

SAVELLA (*to his followers*)

Go, search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates, that none escape!

BEATRICE

What now?

BERNARDO

I know not what to say — my father's dead.

BEATRICE

How, dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not *dead?*

BERNARDO

Dead; murdered!

LUCRETIA (*with extreme agitation*)

Oh, no, no!
He is not murdered, though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

SAVELLA

Ha! is it so?

BEATRICE

My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well;
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.

SAVELLA

Can you suspect who may have murdered him?

BERNARDO

I know not what to think.

SAVELLA

Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?

BERNARDO

Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.

SAVELLA

'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight,
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber
Among the branches of a pine; he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood.
Favor me, sir — it much imports your house
That all should be made clear — to tell the ladies
That I request their presence.

[*Exit* BERNARDO.

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO

GUARD

We have one.

OFFICER

My Lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci;
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore

A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice; the other fell
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA

What does he confess?

OFFICER

He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

SAVELLA

Their language is at least sincere.
(*Reads*)

"To the Lady Beatrice.

That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write.

Thy devoted servant,

Orsino."

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, *and* Bernardo

Knowest thou this writing, lady?

BEATRICE

No.

SAVELLA

Nor thou?

LUCRETIA (*her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation*)

Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror

Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA

Is it so,
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

BEATRICE

Not hate, 'twas more than hate;
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

SAVELLA

There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

BEATRICE

What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

SAVELLA

I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

LUCRETIA

Oh, not to Rome! indeed we are not guilty.

BEATRICE

Guilty! who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,

Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

SAVELLA

You own
That you desired his death?

BEATRICE

It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew — for God is wise and just —
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven. Now what of this?

SAVELLA

Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both;
I judge thee not.

BEATRICE

And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life; the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free; stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum; let them have been enough;
Leave us the wreck we have.

SAVELLA

I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome.
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

LUCRETIA

Oh, not to Rome! Oh, take us not to Rome!

BEATRICE

Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there,
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady! lean

On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother, will you come?

LUCRETIA

Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! Oh, misery!
(*She faints, and is borne out*)

SAVELLA

She faints; an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE

My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not; a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness;
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord.
Our suite will join yours in the court below.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in* ORSINO'S *Palace. Enter* ORSINO *and* GIACOMO.

GIACOMO

Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
Oh, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
Oh, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas, alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

ORSINO

It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

GIACOMO

To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes —

ORSINO

You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

GIACOMO

Oh, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire —

ORSINO

'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess 'tis fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?

GIACOMO

How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

ORSINO

I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

GIACOMO

Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She who alone, in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends — I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But no — defend thyself;
(*Drawing*)
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO

Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak,

The ministers of justice wait below;
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO

O generous friend! how canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO

That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor?

[*Exit* GIACOMO.

I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,
And turned it to a net of ruin — Ha!

(*A shout is heard*)

Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise,
Rags on my back and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd,
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then,

For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life fashioned on old desires,
To change the honors of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered. — Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of — what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves,
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye?

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Hall of Justice.* CAMILLO, JUDGES, *etc., are discovered seated;* MARZIO *is led in.*

FIRST JUDGE

Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence. Speak truth, and the whole truth.

MARZIO

My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

SECOND JUDGE

Away with him!

FIRST JUDGE

Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner
That you would bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

MARZIO

Spare me! Oh, spare! I will confess.

FIRST JUDGE

Then speak.

MARZIO

I strangled him in his sleep.

FIRST JUDGE

Who urged you to it?

MARZIO

His own son Giacomo and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

FIRST JUDGE

This sounds as bad as truth.
Guards, there, lead forth the prisoners.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?

BEATRICE

We never saw him.

MARZIO

You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

BEATRICE

I know thee! how? where? when?

MARZIO

You know 'twas I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done,
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold,
And bade me thrive; how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[BEATRICE *advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*

Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound; 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.

BEATRICE

Poor wretch, I pity thee; yet stay awhile.

CAMILLO

Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE

Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom; can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply;
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is, that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told, "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life;" and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, "I confess anything,"
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonorable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

59 *thou* || *you*, Rossetti.

CAMILLO (*much moved*)

What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

JUDGE

Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO

I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived, he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her color, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy!

JUDGE

Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay, even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

BEATRICE

What evidence? This man's?

JUDGE

Even so.

BEATRICE (*to* MARZIO)

Come near. And who art thou, thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men,
To kill the innocent?

MARZIO

I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE

Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask.

(*Turning to the Judges*)

I prithee mark
His countenance; unlike bold calumny,
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

(*To* MARZIO)

What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

MARZIO

Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round — I cannot speak —
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch!
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

BEATRICE

My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern as to have planned the crime alleged,

Which your suspicions dictate to this slave
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife,
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? that with such horrible need
For deepest silence I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and see, he lives!

(*Turning to* MARZIO)

And thou —

MARZIO

Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.

(*To the Judges*)

I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

CAMILLO

Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice;
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

BEATRICE

O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay.
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!

Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope ; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame ; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal ; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off ;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation.
And art thou the accuser ? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth ;
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say : "My Maker,
I have done this and more ; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth ;
And because she endured what never any,
Guilty or innocent, endured before,
Because her wrongs could not be told, nor thought,
Because thy hand at length did rescue her,
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house and stainless fame !
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,

145 *you* ‖ *thee*, Rossetti.

Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is —
Hear me, great God! — I swear, most innocent;
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

MARZIO

Thou art not!

JUDGE

What is this?

MARZIO

I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

JUDGE

Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

MARZIO

Torture me as ye will;
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me!
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.

[*Exit* MARZIO, *guarded.*

165 *pang*, Shelley, 1821 ‖ *pain*, Shelley, 1819.

CAMILLO

What say ye now, my Lords?

JUDGE

Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice-sifted by the frozen wind.

CAMILLO

Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE (*to* BEATRICE)

Know you this paper, Lady?

BEATRICE

Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer

OFFICER

Marzio's dead.

JUDGE

What did he say?

OFFICER

Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,

As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And holding his breath died.

JUDGE

There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners
Who yet remain stubborn.

CAMILLO

I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

JUDGE

Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready; for this night,
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.*

Enter BERNARDO

BERNARDO

How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent,
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,

How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus — wake, awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?

BEATRICE (*awaking*)

I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

BERNARDO

Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! Oh, God,
How shall I tell?

BEATRICE

What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?

BERNARDO

Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say,
My heart will break.

BEATRICE

See now, thou mak'st me weep;
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

BERNARDO

They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures —

BEATRICE

Ha! what was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE, *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendor laid in dust?
And that eternal honor, which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a byword? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave — what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,

28 *least* || *most*, Rossetti conj.

And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO

They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains;
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA

Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO

If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

JUDGE

Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures —

BEATRICE

Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed — not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,

My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end;
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed — such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

JUDGE

Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

BEATRICE

Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.

JUDGE

She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!

BEATRICE

Oh, tear him not away!

JUDGE

Guards! do your duty.

BERNARDO (*embracing* BEATRICE)

Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?

OFFICER

That is the headsman's business.

[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO.

GIACOMO

Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
No hope! no refuge! O weak, wicked tongue,
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister —
Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black, guilty world — to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless; and I — Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus?

(*Covers his face and weeps*)

LUCRETIA

O my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain

Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

BEATRICE

What 'twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile;
Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live. Lie down—
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigh-ho!
What is this whispers low?

There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep! were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O World! farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.

(*The scene closes*)

SCENE IV. — *A Hall of the Prison. Enter* CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO.

CAMILLO

The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom; not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice —
"Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?" then to another — "Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words, coldly — "They must die."

BERNARDO

And yet you left him not?

CAMILLO

I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied — "Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife,
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO

Oh, God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood

May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return!

[*Rushes out.*

CAMILLO

Alas, poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

BEATRICE

I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO

May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE (*wildly*)

Oh,
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? so young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost!
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be —
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there
should be

No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world —
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be — my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come,
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

LUCRETIA

Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ; ere night,
Think we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE

'Tis past!
Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill;
How tedious, false, and cold seem all things! I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,

'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

(*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances*)

GIACOMO

Know you not, mother — sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA

Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years.
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE

Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope;
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring;
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;

Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man —
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, mother, we must die;
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now —

BERNARDO *rushes in*

BERNARDO

Oh, horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one — what if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see

That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon —
Thee, light of life — dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves —
Dead! the sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and Guards*

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted — white — cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

BEATRICE

Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now;
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child;
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind

136 *was as a*, Rossetti || *was a*, Shelley, 1819, 1821.

Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

BERNARDO

I cannot say farewell!

CAMILLO

O Lady Beatrice!

BEATRICE

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well — 'tis very well.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

The Mask of Anarchy was published, with Shelley's name, at London, in 1832, under the imprint of Bradbury and Evans, for Edward Moxon. The volume was edited by Leigh Hunt. The poem had been composed in the fall of 1819, soon after the riot at Manchester on August 16, toward the close of Shelley's residence at the Villa Valvasano, near Leghorn, or during his stay at Florence. It was sent to Hunt for insertion in the *Examiner*, but its publication at that time was deemed inexpedient by him. The MS. sent to Hunt, in the hand of Mrs. Shelley, with corrections in Shelley's hand, is in the possession of Mr. Townshend Mayer, and has been carefully described by Forman. It affords several variations from Hunt's text. A MS. in Shelley's hand, given by Mrs. Shelley to Sir John Bowring in 1826, of which a facsimile was published by the Shelley Society in 1887, is the authority for the text. The original is in the possession of Mr. Thomas J. Wise. Mrs. Shelley, in her editions of 1839, differs from both MSS. and the Hunt text.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE AT MANCHESTER

I

As I lay asleep in Italy,
There came a voice from over the sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II

I met Murder on the way —
He had a mask like Castlereagh;
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven bloodhounds followed him.

III

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew,
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

IV

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;

iv. 2 *Like Eldon,* Hunt MS., Forman || *Like Lord Eldon,* Wise MS., Hunt, 1832; *ermined,* Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *ermine,* Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell;

V

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

VI

Clothed with the Bible as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like bishops, lawyers, peers or spies.

VIII

Last came Anarchy; he rode
On a white horse splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX

And he wore a kingly crown;
In his grasp a sceptre shone;

vi. 1 *with the* || *in the,* Wise MS. cancelled.
2 *shadows,* Wise MS., Hunt, 1832 || *shadow,* Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].
vii. 4 *or* || *and,* Wise MS.
ix. 2 *And* in *his grasp,* Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *And,* omit, *hand,* Wise MS., Hunt MS. cancelled, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

On his brow this mark I saw —
"I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!"

X

With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

XI

And a mighty troop around
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword
For the service of their Lord.

XII

And, with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England, proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

XIII

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed that Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down,
Till they came to London town.

XIV

And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken,

ix. 3 *And on*, Hunt, 1832.
xii. 2 *Rode* || *Passed*, Wise MS. cancelled.
xiii. 2 *that*, Wise MS. || *the*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV

For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers who did sing,
"Thou art God, and Law, and King.

XVI

"We have waited, weak and lone,
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

XVII

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering — "Thou art Law and God!"

XVIII

Then all cried with one accord,
"Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!"

xiv. 3 *tempestuous*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *tremendous*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

xv. 1 *him* || *them*, Wise MS. cancelled.

xviii. 2 *God*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *Law*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

XIX

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX

For he knew the palaces
Of our kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

XXI

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned parliament,

XXII

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said;
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

XXIII

"My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;

xx. 1 *For* || *And*, Wise MS. cancelled.
xx. 2 *rightly*, Wise MS. || *nightly*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.
xxii. 1 *one passed*, Hunt MS. cancelled.

See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

XXIV

"He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me.
Misery! oh, misery!"

XXV

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting with a patient eye
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy;

XXVI

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose, —
Small at first, and weak, and frail,
Like the vapor of a vale;

XXVII

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

XXVIII

It grew — a Shape arrayed in mail
Brighter than the viper's scale,

xxiii. 4 *Fumbling*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *Trembling*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

xxiv. 2 *And* || *But*, Wise MS. cancelled.

xxvi. 4 *vapors*, Hunt MS. cancelled, *a vale*, Wise MS., Hunt MS. || *the*, Hunt, 1832.

And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through,
Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men — so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked — but all was empty air.

XXXI

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

XXXII

And the prostrate multitude
Looked — and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien;

xxviii. 4 *as*, Wise MS., Hunt, 1832 || *like*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].
xxix. 3 *its*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Rossetti, 1870 || *it*, Hunt, 1832.
xxx. 4 *but*, Wise MS. || *and*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.
xxxi. 1 *May's footstep*, Wise MS., Hunt MS. Forman || *the footstep*, Hunt, 1832, *May's footsteps*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].
xxxi. 4 *Thoughts* || *Hopes*, Wise MS. cancelled.

XXXIII

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death, tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

XXXIV

A rushing light of clouds and splendor,
A sense, awakening and yet tender,
Was heard and felt — and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose,

XXXV

As if their own indignant earth,
Which gave the sons of England birth,
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother's throe

XXXVI

Had turned every drop of blood,
By which her face had been bedewed,
To an accent unwithstood,
As if her heart cried out aloud:

XXXVII

"Men of England, heirs of glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another:

xxxv. 3 *their* || *the*, Hunt MS. cancelled.
xxxvi. 4 *cried out*, Wise MS. || *had cried*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

XXXVIII

" Rise like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number;
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you —
Ye are many, they are few.

XXXIX

" What is Freedom? — Ye can tell
That which Slavery is too well,
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

XL

" 'Tis to work, and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell,
For the tyrants' use to dwell,

XLI

" So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade —
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

XLII

" 'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak —
They are dying whilst I speak.

xxxviii. 5 omit, Hunt, 1832.

XLIII

" 'Tis to hunger for such diet,
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye.

XLIV

" 'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from toil a thousand-fold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old;

XLV

" Paper coin — that forgery
Of the title deeds which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

XLVI

" 'Tis to be a slave in soul,
And to hold no strong control
Over your own will, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII

" And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain,
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you —
Blood is on the grass like dew!

xlv. 3 *of* || *from*, Wise MS.
xlvi. 3 *will*, Wise MS. || *wills*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

XLVIII

" Then it is to feel revenge,
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood — and wrong for wrong:
Do not thus when ye are strong!

XLIX

" Birds find rest in narrow nest,
When weary of their wingèd quest;
Beasts find fare in woody lair,
When storm and snow are in the air.

L

" Horses, oxen, have a home,
When from daily toil they come;
Household dogs, when the wind roars,
Find a home within warm doors.

LI

" Asses, swine, have litter spread,
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one —
Thou, O Englishman, hast none!

LII

" This is Slavery; savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den,
Would endure not as ye do —
But such ills they never knew.

xlix. 2 *their*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *the*, Hunt, 1832.

xlix. 3 *woody* || *rocky*, Wise MS. cancelled.

l. 1–4 Wise MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || omit, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

LIII

" What art thou, Freedom ? Oh, could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand, tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery.

LIV

" Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

LV

" For the laborer thou art bread
And a comely table spread,
From his daily labor come
In a neat and happy home.

LVI

" Thou art clothes, and fire, and food,
For the trampled multitude ;
No — in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

LVII

" To the rich thou art a check ;
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

liv. 4 *cave*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *caves*, Hunt MS. cancelled, Hunt, 1832.

lv. 4 *In*, Wise MS., Hunt, 1832 || *To*, Hunt MS., Forman.

LVIII

" Thou art Justice — ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold,
As laws are in England ; thou
Shield'st alike both high and low.

LIX

" Thou art Wisdom — freemen never
Dream that God will damn forever
All who think those things untrue
Of which priests make such ado.

LX

" Thou art Peace — never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be,
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

LXI

" What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood ?
It availed, O Liberty !
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

LXII

" Thou art Love — the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and, like him following Christ,

lviii. 4 *both*, Wise MS. || *the*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

lix. 1 *freemen*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *freedom*, Hunt, 1832.

lix. 2 *dream*, Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *dreams*, Hunt, 1832. *damn*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *doom*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

lx. 3 *those*, Hunt MS. cancelled.

Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee ;

LXIII

" Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy belovèd sake
On wealth and war and fraud, whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIV

" Science, Poetry and Thought
Are thy lamps ; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
Such they curse their maker not.

LXV

" Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless,
Art thou — let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

LXVI

" Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free

lxii. 3 *give*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *given*, Wise MS., Hunt MS. cancelled, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

lxii. 4 *follow*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *followed*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

lxiii. 1 *Or*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Forman || *Oh*, Hunt, 1832.

lxiv. 1 *Science, Poetry*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Forman || *Science and Poetry*, Hunt, 1832.

lxiv. 4 Wise MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *So serene they curse it not*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

lxv. 3 *let deeds not* || *but deeds not*, Hunt MS. cancelled ; *how can*, Wise MS. cancelled.

lxvi. 2 *and*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *of*, Hunt, 1832.

On some spot of English ground,
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVII

" Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be,
Witness the solemnity.

LXVIII

" From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village and town,
Where those, who live and suffer, moan
For others' misery or their own;

LXIX

" From the workhouse and the prison,
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old,
Groan for pain, and weep for cold;

LXX

" From the haunts of daily life,
Where is waged the daily strife

lxviii. 4 *those* || *all*, Wise MS. cancelled.

lxviii. 5 *or*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *and*, Hunt, 1832.

lxviii.-lxix. : —

From the cities where from caves,
Like the dead from putrid graves,
Troops of starvelings gliding come,
Living Tenants of a tomb.

Wise MS. *Troops* || *Hosts*, Wise MS. cancelled. *Tenants of a living tomb*, Wise MS. cancelled.

lxix. 2 *corpses* || *spectres*, Wise MS. cancelled.

With common wants and common cares,
Which sows the human heart with tares;

LXXI

"Lastly, from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive, around

LXXII

"Those prison-halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail,
As must make their brethren pale; —

LXXIII

"Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold:

LXXIV

"Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free!

LXXV

"Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords;

lxx. 4 *sows*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Forman || *sow*, Hunt, 1832.
lxxiii. 4 *With* || *For*, Wise MS. cancelled, Wise MS.
lxxiv. 3 *measured*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt 1832 || *ne'er-said*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

LXXVI

"Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

LXXVII

"Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVIII

"Let the fixèd bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood,
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXIX

"Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXX

"Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,

lxviii. 2 *sharp* || *keen*, Wise MS. cancelled.
4 *keen* || *sharp*, Wise MS. cancelled.

With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.

LXXXI

"And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armèd steeds,
Pass, a disregarded shade,
Through your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXII

"Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand,
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute: —

LXXXIII

"The old laws of England — they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo — Liberty!

LXXXIV

"On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue;
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXV

"And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew;
What they like, that let them do.

lxxx. 4 Wise MS. || *of an*, Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832.

LXXXVI

"With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay,
Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVII

"Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came;
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

LXXXVIII

"Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand;
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

LXXXIX

"And the bold true warriors,
Who have hugged Danger in wars,
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.

XC

"And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

lxxxvi. 3 *slay*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *stay*, Hunt, 1832.

lxxxix. 2 *in wars*, Wise MS., Hunt MS., Hunt, 1832 || *in the wars*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

XCI

" And these words shall then become
Like oppression's thundered doom,
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again — again — again !

XCII

" Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number !
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you —
Ye are many, they are few ! "

xci. 1 *then become* || *be the beacon*, Hunt MS. cancelled.

PETER BELL THE THIRD

Peter Bell the Third was published in Mrs. Shelley's second edition of the collected poems, 1839. The poem was composed at Florence during the latter part of October, 1819, and sent, November 2, to Hunt to be published by Ollier without Shelley's name. Why it was not issued is unknown. John Hamilton Reynolds had published, early in the year, *Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad*, a satire upon Wordsworth's poetry. A few days later *Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad*, by Wordsworth, appeared. Both these poems were noticed in Hunt's *Examiner*, April 26 and May 3. It is presumed that these reviews are the criticisms referred to by Mrs. Shelley as reaching Shelley at Leghorn and affording him much amusement. His own poem, thus suggested, was due less to dissatisfaction with Wordsworth's verse than with his principles.

PETER BELL THE THIRD

BY

MICHING MALLECHO, ESQ.

Is it a party in a parlor,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,
Some sipping punch — some sipping tea;
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent, and all ——— damned!

Peter Bell, by W. WORDSWORTH.

OPHELIA. — What means this, my lord?
HAMLET. — Marry, this is Miching Mallecho; it means mischief.

SHAKESPEARE.

DEDICATION

TO THOMAS BROWN, ESQ., THE YOUNGER, H. F.

DEAR TOM, — Allow me to request you to introduce Mr. Peter Bell to the respectable family of the Fudges. Although he may fall short of those very considerable personages in the more active properties which characterize the Rat and the Apostate, I suspect that even you, their historian, will confess that he surpasses them in the more peculiarly legitimate qualification of intolerable dulness.

You know Mr. Examiner Hunt; well — it was he who presented me to two of the Mr. Bells. My intimacy with the younger Mr. Bell naturally sprung from this introduction to his brothers. And in presenting him to you I have the satisfaction of being able to assure you that he is considerably the dullest of the three.

There is this particular advantage in an acquaintance with any one of the Peter Bells that, if you know one Peter Bell, you know three Peter Bells; they are not one, but three;

not three, but one. An awful mystery, which, after having caused torrents of blood and having been hymned by groans enough to deafen the music of the spheres, is at length illustrated to the satisfaction of all parties in the theological world by the nature of Mr. Peter Bell.

Peter is a polyhedric Peter, or a Peter with many sides. He changes colors like a chameleon and his coat like a snake. He is a Proteus of a Peter. He was at first sublime, pathetic, impressive, profound ; then dull ; then prosy and dull ; and now dull — oh, so very dull ! it is an ultra-legitimate dulness.

You will perceive that it is not necessary to consider Hell and the Devil as supernatural machinery. The whole scene of my epic is in "this world which is" — so Peter informed us before his conversion to *White Obi* —

> The world of all of us, *and where*
> *We find our happiness, or not at all.*

Let me observe that I have spent six or seven days in composing this sublime piece ; the orb of my moon-like genius has made the fourth part of its revolution round the dull earth which you inhabit, driving you mad, while it has retained its calmness and its splendor, and I have been fitting this its last phase "to occupy a permanent station in the literature of my country."

Your works, indeed, dear Tom, sell better ; but mine are far superior. The public is no judge ; posterity sets all to rights.

Allow me to observe that so much has been written of Peter Bell that the present history can be considered only, like the Iliad, as a continuation of that series of cyclic poems which have already been candidates for bestowing immortality upon, at the same time that they receive it from, his character and adventures. In this point of view I have violated no rule of syntax in beginning my composition with a conjunction ; the full stop, which closes the poem continued by me, being, like the full stops at the end of the Iliad and Odyssey, a full stop of a very qualified import.

Hoping that the immortality which you have given to the

Fudges, you will receive from them ; and in the firm expectation that when London shall be an habitation of bitterns, when St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey shall stand, shapeless and nameless ruins, in the midst of an unpeopled marsh ; when the piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream, some transatlantic commentator will be weighing in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of criticism the respective merits of the Bells and the Fudges and their historians,

I remain, dear Tom,

Yours sincerely,

MICHING MALLECHO.

December 1, 1819.

P. S. — Pray excuse the date of place ; so soon as the profits of the publication come in, I mean to hire lodgings in a more respectable street.

PETER BELL

PROLOGUE

Peter Bells, one, two and three,
O'er the wide world wandering be.
First, the antenatal Peter,
Wrapped in weeds of the same metre,
The so long predestined raiment,
Clothed in which to walk his way meant
The second Peter; whose ambition
Is to link the proposition,
As the mean of two extremes,
(This was learned from Aldrich's themes),
Shielding from the guilt of schism
The orthodoxal syllogism;
The First Peter — he who was
Like the shadow in the glass
Of the second, yet unripe,
His substantial antitype.
Then came Peter Bell the Second,
Who henceforward must be reckoned
The body of a double soul,
And that portion of the whole
Without which the rest would seem
Ends of a disjointed dream.
And the Third is he who has
O'er the grave been forced to pass
To the other side, which is —
Go and try else — just like this.

Peter Bell the First was Peter
Smugger, milder, softer, neater,
Like the soul before it is
Born from *that* world into *this*.
The next Peter Bell was he,
Predevote, like you and me,
To good or evil, as may come;
His was the severer doom, —
For he was an evil Cotter,
And a polygamic Potter.
And the last is Peter Bell,
Damned since our first parents fell,
Damned eternally to Hell —
Surely he deserves it well!

PART THE FIRST

DEATH

I

And Peter Bell, when he had been
With fresh-imported Hell-fire warmed,
Grew serious — from his dress and mien
'Twas very plainly to be seen
Peter was quite reformed.

II

His eyes turned up, his mouth turned down;
His accent caught a nasal twang;
He oiled his hair; there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang.

III

But Peter now grew old, and had
An ill no doctor could unravel;
His torments almost drove him mad;
Some said it was a fever bad;
Some swore it was the gravel.

IV

His holy friends then came about,
And with long preaching and persuasion
Convinced the patient that without
The smallest shadow of a doubt
He was predestined to damnation.

V

They said — "Thy name is Peter Bell;
Thy skin is of a brimstone hue;
Alive or dead — ay, sick or well —
The one God made to rhyme with hell;
The other, I think, rhymes with you."

VI

Then Peter set up such a yell!
The nurse, who with some water gruel
Was climbing up the stairs, as well
As her old legs could climb them — fell,
And broke them both — the fall was cruel.

VII

The Parson from the casement leapt
Into the lake of Windermere;
And many an eel — though no adept

In God's right reason for it — kept
Gnawing his kidneys half a year.

VIII

And all the rest rushed through the door,
And tumbled over one another,
And broke their skulls. — Upon the floor
Meanwhile sat Peter Bell, and swore,
And cursed his father and his mother;

IX

And raved of God, and sin, and death,
Blaspheming like an infidel;
And said that with his clenchèd teeth
He'd seize the earth from underneath
And drag it with him down to hell.

X

As he was speaking came a spasm
And wrenched his gnashing teeth asunder;
Like one who sees a strange phantasm
He lay, — there was a silent chasm
Betwixt his upper jaw and under.

XI

And yellow death lay on his face;
And a fixed smile that was not human
Told, as I understand the case,
That he was gone to the wrong place.
I heard all this from the old woman.

XII

Then there came down from Langdale Pike
A cloud, with lightning, wind and hail;
It swept over the mountains like
An ocean, — and I heard it strike
The woods and crags of Grasmere vale.

XIII

And I saw the black storm come
Nearer, minute after minute;
Its thunder made the cataracts dumb;
With hiss, and clash, and hollow hum,
It neared as if the Devil was in it.

XIV

The Devil *was* in it; he had bought
Peter for half-a-crown; and when
The storm which bore him vanished, nought
That in the house that storm had caught
Was ever seen again.

XV

The gaping neighbors came next day;
They found all vanished from the shore;
The Bible, whence he used to pray,
Half scorched under a hen-coop lay;
Smashed glass — and nothing more!

PART THE SECOND

THE DEVIL

I

THE Devil, I safely can aver,
Has neither hoof, nor tail, nor sting;
Nor is he, as some sages swear,
A spirit, neither here nor there,
In nothing — yet in everything.

II

He is — what we are; for sometimes
The Devil is a gentleman;
At others a bard bartering rhymes
For sack; a statesman spinning crimes;
A swindler, living as he can;

III

A thief, who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like some one whom it were not right
To mention, — or the luckless wight,
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.

IV

But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face and eye severe
On every side did perk and peer
Till he saw Peter dead or napping.

V

He had on an upper Benjamin
(For he was of the driving schism)
In the which he wrapped his skin
From the storm he travelled in,
For fear of rheumatism.

VI

He called the ghost out of the corse, —
It was exceedingly like Peter,
Only its voice was hollow and hoarse;
It had a queerish look, of course;
Its dress too was a little neater.

VII

The Devil knew not his name and lot;
Peter knew not that he was Bell;
Each had an upper stream of thought,
Which made all seem as it was not,
Fitting itself to all things well.

VIII

Peter thought he had parents dear,
Brothers, sisters, cousins, cronies,
In the fens of Lincolnshire;
He perhaps had found them there
Had he gone and boldly shown his

IX

Solemn phiz in his own village,
Where he thought oft when a boy
He'd clomb the orchard walls to pillage

The produce of his neighbor's tillage,
With marvellous pride and joy.

X

And the Devil thought he had,
'Mid the misery and confusion
Of an unjust war, just made
A fortune by the gainful trade
Of giving soldiers rations bad —
The world is full of strange delusion;

XI

That he had a mansion planned
In a square like Grosvenor-square,
That he was aping fashion, and
That he now came to Westmoreland
To see what was romantic there.

XII

And all this, though quite ideal,
Ready at a breath to vanish,
Was a state not more unreal
Than the peace he could not feel,
Or the care he could not banish.

XIII

After a little conversation,
The Devil told Peter, if he chose,
He'd bring him to the world of fashion
By giving him a situation
In his own service — and new clothes.

XIV

And Peter bowed, quite pleased and proud,
  And after waiting some few days
For a new livery — dirty yellow
Turned up with black — the wretched fellow
  Was bowled to Hell in the Devil's chaise.

PART THE THIRD

HELL

I

Hell is a city much like London —
  A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
  Small justice shown, and still less pity.

II

There is a Castles, and a Canning,
  A Cobbett, and a Castlereagh;
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning
All sorts of cozening for trepanning
  Corpses less corrupt than they.

III

There is a ——, who has lost
  His wits, or sold them, none knows which;
He walks about a double ghost,
And, though as thin as Fraud almost,
  Ever grows more grim and rich.

IV

There is a Chancery Court; a King;
A manufacturing mob; a set
Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent;
An army; and a public debt.

V

Which last is a scheme of paper money,
And means — being interpreted —
"Bees, keep your wax — give us the honey,
And we will plant, while skies are sunny,
Flowers, which in winter serve instead."

VI

There is great talk of revolution —
And a great chance of despotism —
German soldiers — camps — confusion —
Tumults — lotteries — rage — delusion —
Gin — suicide — and methodism;

VII

Taxes too, on wine and bread,
And meat, and beer, and tea, and cheese,
From which those patriots pure are fed,
Who gorge before they reel to bed,
The tenfold essence of all these.

VIII

There are mincing women, mewing
(Like cats, who *amant miserè*)
Of their own virtue, and pursuing

Their gentler sisters to that ruin
Without which — what were chastity?

IX

Lawyers — judges — old hobnobbers
Are there — bailiffs — chancellors —
Bishops — great and little robbers —
Rhymesters — pamphleteers — stock-jobbers —
Men of glory in the wars;

X

Things whose trade is, over ladies
To lean, and flirt, and stare, and simper,
Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman,
Crucified 'twixt a smile and whimper;

XI

Thrusting, toiling, wailing, moiling,
Frowning, preaching — such a riot!
Each with never-ceasing labor,
Whilst he thinks he cheats his neighbor,
Cheating his own heart of quiet.

XII

And all these meet at levees;
Dinners convivial and political;
Suppers of epic poets; teas,
Where small talk dies in agonies;
Breakfasts professional and critical;

XIII

Lunches and snacks so aldermanic
That one would furnish forth ten dinners,

Where reigns a Cretan-tonguèd panic,
Lest news Russ, Dutch, or Alemannic
Should make some losers, and some winners;

XIV

At conversazioni — balls —
Conventicles — and drawing-rooms —
Courts of law — committees — calls
Of a morning — clubs — book-stalls —
Churches — masquerades — and tombs.

XV

And this is Hell — and in this smother
Are all damnable and damned;
Each one, damning, damns the other;
They are damned by one another,
By none other are they damned.

XVI

'Tis a lie to say, "God damns!"
Where was Heaven's Attorney-General
When they first gave out such flams?
Let there be an end of shams;
They are mines of poisonous mineral.

XVII

Statesmen damn themselves to be
Cursed; and lawyers damn their souls
To the auction of a fee;
Churchmen damn themselves to see
God's sweet love in burning coals.

XVIII

The rich are damned, beyond all cure,
To taunt, and starve, and trample on
The weak and wretched; and the poor
Damn their broken hearts to endure
Stripe on stripe, with groan on groan.

XIX

Sometimes the poor are damned indeed
To take, not means for being blessed,
But Cobbett's snuff, revenge; that weed
From which the worms that it doth feed
Squeeze less than they before possessed.

XX

And some few, like we know who,
Damned — but God alone knows why —
To believe their minds are given
To make this ugly Hell a Heaven;
In which faith they live and die.

XXI

Thus, as in a town, plague-stricken,
Each man, be he sound or no,
Must indifferently sicken;
As when day begins to thicken,
None knows a pigeon from a crow;

XXII

So good and bad, sane and mad,
The oppressor and the oppressed;
Those who weep to see what others

Smile to inflict upon their brothers;
Lovers, haters, worst and best;

XXIII

All are damned — they breathe an air,
Thick, infected, joy-dispelling;
Each pursues what seems most fair,
Mining, like moles, through mind, and there
Scoop palace-caverns vast, where Care
In thronèd state is ever dwelling.

PART THE FOURTH

SIN

I

Lo, Peter in Hell's Grosvenor-square,
A footman in the Devil's service!
And the misjudging world would swear
That every man in service there
To virtue would prefer vice.

II

But Peter, though now damned, was not
What Peter was before damnation.
Men oftentimes prepare a lot
Which, ere it finds them, is not what
Suits with their genuine station.

III

All things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him;

And when they came within the belt
Of his own nature, seemed to melt,
  Like cloud to cloud, into him.

IV

And so the outward world uniting
  To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those, who meditation slighting,
  Were moulded in a different frame.

V

And he scorned them, and they scorned him;
  And he scorned all they did; and they
Did all that men of their own trim
Are wont to do to please their whim —
  Drinking, lying, swearing, play.

VI

Such were his fellow-servants; thus
  His virtue, like our own, was built
Too much on that indignant fuss
Hypocrite Pride stirs up in us
  To bully one another's guilt.

VII

He had a mind which was somehow
  At once circumference and centre
Of all he might or feel or know;
Nothing went ever out, although
  Something did ever enter.

vi. 5 *one*, Fleay conj., Rossetti || *out*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[2].

VIII.

He had as much imagination
As a pint-pot; — he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation,
Than that wherein he stood.

IX

Yet his was individual mind,
And new-created all he saw
In a new manner, and refined
Those new creations, and combined
Them, by a master-spirit's law.

X

Thus — though unimaginative —
An apprehension clear, intense,
Of his mind's work, had made alive
The things it wrought on; I believe
Wakening a sort of thought in sense.

XI

But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a kind of moral eunuch;
He touched the hem of Nature's shift,
Felt faint — and never dared uplift
The closest, all-concealing tunic.

XII

She laughed the while, with an arch smile,
And kissed him with a sister's kiss,
And said — "My best Diogenes,

I love you well — but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

XIII

" 'Tis you are cold — for I, not coy,
Yield love for love, frank, warm and true;
And Burns, a Scottish peasant boy —
His errors prove it — knew my joy
More, learnèd friend, than you.

XIV

" *Bocca bacciata non perde ventura*
Anzi rinnuova come fa la luna : —
So thought Boccaccio, whose sweet words might cure a
Male prude, like you, from what you now endure, a
Low-tide in soul, like a stagnant laguna."

XV

Then Peter rubbed his eyes severe,
And smoothed his spacious forehead down,
With his broad palm; 'twixt love and fear,
He looked, as he no doubt felt, queer,
And in his dream sate down.

XVI

The Devil was no uncommon creature;
A leaden-witted thief — just huddled
Out of the dross and scum of nature;
A toad-like lump of limb and feature,
With mind, and heart, and fancy muddled.

XVII

He was that heavy, dull, cold thing,
The spirit of evil well may be;
A drone too base to have a sting;
Who gluts, and grimes his lazy wing,
And calls lust luxury.

XVIII

Now he was quite the kind of wight
Round whom collect, at a fixed era,
Venison, turtle, hock, and claret, —
Good cheer — and those who come to share it —
And best East Indian madeira!

XIX

It was his fancy to invite
Men of science, wit, and learning,
Who came to lend each other light;
He proudly thought that his gold's might
Had set those spirits burning.

XX

And men of learning, science, wit,
Considered him as you and I
Think of some rotten tree, and sit
Lounging and dining under it,
Exposed to the wide sky.

XXI

And all the while, with loose fat smile,
The willing wretch sat winking there,
Believing 'twas his power that made

That jovial scene — and that all paid
Homage to his unnoticed chair;

XXII

Though to be sure this place was Hell;
He was the Devil — and all they —
What though the claret circled well,
And wit, like ocean, rose and fell? —
Were damned eternally.

PART THE FIFTH

GRACE

I

Among the guests who often stayed
Till the Devil's petits-soupers,
A man there came, fair as a maid,
And Peter noted what he said,
Standing behind his master's chair.

II

He was a mighty poet — and
A subtle-souled psychologist;
All things he seemed to understand,
Of old or new — of sea or land —
But his own mind — which was a mist.

III

This was a man who might have turned
Hell into Heaven — and so in gladness
A Heaven unto himself have earned;
But he in shadows undiscerned
Trusted, — and damned himself to madness.

IV

He spoke of poetry, and how
"Divine it was — a light — a love —
A spirit which like wind doth blow
As it listeth, to and fro;
A dew rained down from God above;

V

"A power which comes and goes like dream,
And which none can ever trace —
Heaven's light on earth — Truth's brightest beam."
And when he ceased there lay the gleam
Of those words upon his face.

VI

Now Peter, when he heard such talk,
Would, heedless of a broken pate,
Stand like a man asleep, or balk
Some wishing guest of knife or fork,
Or drop and break his master's plate.

VII

At night he oft would start and wake
Like a lover, and began
In a wild measure songs to make
On moor, and glen, and rocky lake,
And on the heart of man, —

VIII

And on the universal sky,
And the wide earth's bosom green,
And the sweet, strange mystery

Of what beyond these things may lie,
And yet remain unseen.

IX

For in his thought he visited
The spots in which, ere dead and damned,
He his wayward life had led;
Yet knew not whence the thoughts were fed,
Which thus his fancy crammed.

X

And these obscure remembrances
Stirred such harmony in Peter,
That whensoever he should please,
He could speak of rocks and trees
In poetic metre.

XI

For though it was without a sense
Of memory, yet he remembered well
Many a ditch and quick-set fence;
Of lakes he had intelligence;
He knew something of heath and fell.

XII

He had also dim recollections
Of pedlers tramping on their rounds;
Milk-pans and pails; and odd collections
Of saws and proverbs; and reflections
Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

XIII

But Peter's verse was clear, and came
Announcing from the frozen hearth

Of a cold age, that none might tame
The soul of that diviner flame
It augured to the Earth;

XIV

Like gentle rains, on the dry plains,
Making that green which late was gray,
Or like the sudden moon, that stains
Some gloomy chamber's window panes
With a broad light like day.

XV

For language was in Peter's hand
Like clay while he was yet a potter;
And he made songs for all the land,
Sweet, both to feel and understand,
As pipkins late to mountain cotter.

XVI

And Mr. ——, the bookseller,
Gave twenty pounds for some; — then scorning
A footman's yellow coat to wear,
Peter, too proud of heart, I fear,
Instantly gave the Devil warning.

XVII

Whereat the Devil took offence,
And swore in his soul a great oath then,
"That for his damned impertinence,
He'd bring him to a proper sense
Of what was due to gentlemen!"

xv. 5 *to* ‖ *for*, Rossetti conj.

PART THE SIXTH

DAMNATION

I

"O THAT mine enemy had written
A book!" — cried Job; a fearful curse,
If to the Arab, as the Briton,
'Twas galling to be critic-bitten;
The Devil to Peter wished no worse.

II

When Peter's next new book found vent,
The Devil to all the first Reviews
A copy of it slyly sent,
With five-pound note as compliment,
And this short notice — "Pray abuse."

III

Then *seriatim*, month and quarter,
Appeared such mad tirades. One said, —
"Peter seduced Mrs. Foy's daughter,
Then drowned the mother in Ullswater
The last thing as he went to bed."

IV

Another — "Let him shave his head!
Where's Dr. Willis? — Or is he joking?
What does the rascal mean or hope,
No longer imitating Pope,
In that barbarian Shakespeare poking?"

V

One more, "Is incest not enough,
And must there be adultery too?
Grace after meat? Miscreant and Liar!
Thief! Blackguard! Scoundrel! Fool! Hell-fire
Is twenty times too good for you.

VI

"By that last book of yours WE think
You've double damned yourself to scorn;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The babe that is unborn."

VII

All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had
Safely to Peter's house conveyed.
For carriage, tenpence Peter paid —
Untied them — read them — went half-mad.

VIII

"What!" cried he, "this is my reward
For nights of thought, and days of toil?
Do poets, but to be abhorred
By men of whom they never heard,
Consume their spirits' oil?

IX

"What have I done to them? — and who
Is Mrs. Foy? 'Tis very cruel

To speak of me and Betty so!
Adultery! God defend me! Oh!
I've half a mind to fight a duel.

X

"Or," cried he, a grave look collecting,
"Is it my genius, like the moon,
Sets those who stand her face inspecting,
That face within their brain reflecting,
Like a crazed bell-chime, out of tune?"

XI

For Peter did not know the town,
But thought, as country readers do,
For half a guinea or a crown
He bought oblivion or renown
From God's own voice in a Review.

XII

All Peter did on this occasion
Was writing some sad stuff in prose.
It is a dangerous invasion
When poets criticise; their station
Is to delight, not pose.

XIII

The Devil then sent to Leipsic fair,
For Born's translation of Kant's book;
A world of words, tail foremost, where
Right, wrong, false, true, and foul, and fair
As in a lottery-wheel are shook;

ix. 3 *Betty*, Shelley to Ollier, May 14, 1820 || *Emma*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1].

XIV

Five thousand crammed octavo pages
Of German psychologics, — he
Who his *furor verborum* assuages
Thereon deserves just seven months' wages
More than will e'er be due to me.

XV

I looked on them nine several days,
And then I saw that they were bad;
A friend, too, spoke in their dispraise, —
He never read them; with amaze
I found Sir William Drummond had.

XVI

When the book came, the Devil sent
It to P. Verbovale, Esquire,
With a brief note of compliment,
By that night's Carlisle mail. It went,
And set his soul on fire —

XVII

Fire, which *ex luce præbens fumum*,
Made him beyond the bottom see
Of truth's clear well — when I and you, Ma'am,
Go, as we shall do, *subter humum*,
We may know more than he.

XVIII

Now Peter ran to seed in soul
Into a walking paradox;

For he was neither part nor whole,
Nor good, nor bad, nor knave nor fool, —
  Among the woods and rocks.

XIX

Furious he rode, where late he ran,
  Lashing and spurring his tame hobby;
Turned to a formal puritan,
A solemn and unsexual man, —
  He half believed *White Obi.*

XX

This steed in vision he would ride,
  High trotting over nine-inch bridges,
With Flibbertigibbet, imp of pride,
Mocking and mowing by his side —
A mad-brained goblin for a guide —
  Over cornfields, gates and hedges.

XXI

After these ghastly rides, he came
  Home to his heart, and found from thence
Much stolen of its accustomed flame;
His thoughts grew weak, drowsy, and lame
  Of their intelligence.

XXII

To Peter's view, all seemed one hue;
  He was no whig, he was no tory;
No Deist and no Christian he;
He got so subtle that to be
  Nothing was all his glory.

XXIII

One single point in his belief
From his organization sprung,
The heart-enrooted faith, the chief
Ear in his doctrines' blighted sheaf,
That "happiness is wrong."

XXIV

So thought Calvin and Dominic;
So think their fierce successors, who
Even now would neither stint nor stick
Our flesh from off our bones to pick,
If they might "do their do."

XXV

His morals thus were undermined;
The old Peter — the hard, old Potter
Was born anew within his mind;
He grew dull, harsh, sly, unrefined,
As when he tramped beside the Otter.

XXVI

In the death hues of agony
Lambently flashing from a fish,
Now Peter felt amused to see
Shades like a rainbow's rise and flee,
Mixed with a certain hungry wish.

XXVII

So in his Country's dying face
He looked — and lovely as she lay,

xxv 2 *Peter* || *Peter Bell*, Rossetti.

Seeking in vain his last embrace,
Wailing her own abandoned case,
With hardened sneer he turned away;

XXVIII

And coolly to his own soul said, —
"Do you not think that we might make
A poem on her when she's dead;
Or, no — a thought is in my head —
Her shroud for a new sheet I'll take;

XXIX

"My wife wants one. Let who will bury
This mangled corpse! And I and you,
My dearest Soul, will then make merry,
As the Prince Regent did with Sherry, —
Ay — and at last desert me too."

XXX

And so his soul would not be gay,
But moaned within him; like a fawn
Moaning within a cave, it lay
Wounded and wasting, day by day,
Till all its life of life was gone.

XXXI

As troubled skies stain waters clear,
The storm in Peter's heart and mind
Now made his verses dark and queer;
They were the ghosts of what they were,
Shaking dim grave clothes in the wind.

xxix. 5 *me* || *him*, Rossetti conj.

XXXII

For he now raved enormous folly,
Of Baptisms, Sunday-schools, and Graves;
'Twould make George Colman melancholy
To have heard him, like a male Molly,
Chanting those stupid staves.

XXXIII

Yet the Reviews, who heaped abuse
On Peter while he wrote for freedom,
So soon as in his song they spy
The folly which soothes tyranny,
Praise him, for those who feed 'em.

XXXIV

"He was a man, too great to scan;
A planet lost in truth's keen rays;
His virtue, awful and prodigious;
He was the most sublime, religious,
Pure-minded Poet of these days."

XXXV

As soon as he read that, cried Peter,
"Eureka! I have found the way
To make a better thing of metre
Than e'er was made by living creature
Up to this blessèd day."

XXXVI

Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil,
In one of which he meekly said:

"May Carnage and Slaughter,
Thy niece and thy daughter,
May Rapine and Famine,
Thy gorge ever cramming,
Glut thee with living and dead!

XXXVII

"May death and damnation,
And consternation,
Flit up from hell with pure intent!
Slash them at Manchester,
Glasgow, Leeds and Chester;
Drench all with blood from Avon to Trent.

XXXVIII

"Let thy body-guard yeomen
Hew down babes and women
And laugh with bold triumph till Heaven be rent!
When Moloch in Jewry
Munched children with fury,
It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent."

PART THE SEVENTH

DOUBLE DAMNATION

I

THE Devil now knew his proper cue.
Soon as he read the ode, he drove
To his friend Lord MacMurderchouse's,
A man of interest in both houses,
And said: — "For money or for love,

II

"Pray find some cure or sinecure;
To feed from the superfluous taxes,
A friend of ours — a poet; fewer
Have fluttered tamer to the lure
Than he." His lordship stands and racks his

III

Stupid brains, while one might count
As many beads as he had boroughs, —
At length replies, from his mean front,
Like one who rubs out an account,
Smoothing away the unmeaning furrows:

IV

"It happens fortunately, dear Sir,
I can. I hope I need require
No pledge from you that he will stir
In our affairs; — like Oliver,
That he'll be worthy of his hire."

V

These words exchanged, the news sent off
To Peter, home the Devil hied, —
Took to his bed; he had no cough,
No doctor, — meat and drink enough, —
Yet that same night he died.

VI

The Devil's corpse was leaded down;
His decent heirs enjoyed his pelf;

Mourning-coaches, many a one,
Followed his hearse along the town; —
Where was the Devil himself?

VII

When Peter heard of his promotion,
His eyes grew like two stars for bliss;
There was a bow of sleek devotion,
Engendering in his back; each motion
Seemed a Lord's shoe to kiss.

VIII

He hired a house, bought plate, and made
A genteel drive up to his door,
With sifted gravel neatly laid,
As if defying all who said,
Peter was ever poor.

IX

But a disease soon struck into
The very life and soul of Peter;
He walked about — slept — had the hue
Of health upon his cheeks — and few
Dug better — none a heartier eater.

X

And yet a strange and horrid curse
Clung upon Peter, night and day;
Month after month the thing grew worse,
And deadlier than in this my verse
I can find strength to say.

XI

Peter was dull — he was at first
Dull — oh, so dull — so very dull!
Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed —
Still with this dulness was he cursed —
Dull — beyond all conception — dull.

XII

No one could read his books — no mortal,
But a few natural friends, would hear him;
The parson came not near his portal;
His state was like that of the immortal
Described by Swift — no man could bear him.

XIII

His sister, wife, and children yawned,
With a long, slow, and drear ennui,
All human patience far beyond;
Their hopes of Heaven each would have pawned
Anywhere else to be.

XIV

But in his verse, and in his prose,
The essence of his dulness was
Concentred and compressed so close,
'Twould have made Guatimozin doze
On his red gridiron of brass.

XV

A printer's boy, folding those pages,
Fell slumbrously upon one side,
Like those famed seven who slept three ages;

To wakeful frenzy's vigil rages,
As opiates, were the same applied.

XVI

Even the Reviewers who were hired
To do the work of his reviewing,
With adamantine nerves, grew tired;
Gaping and torpid they retired
To dream of what they should be doing.

XVII

And worse and worse the drowsy curse
Yawned in him, till it grew a pest —
A wide contagious atmosphere
Creeping like cold through all things near,
A power to infect and to infest.

XVIII

His servant-maids and dogs grew dull;
His kitten, late a sportive elf;
The woods and lakes, so beautiful,
Of dim stupidity were full;
All grew dull as Peter's self.

XIX

The earth under his feet — the springs
Which lived within it a quick life,
The air, the winds of many wings
That fan it with new murmurings,
Were dead to their harmonious strife.

XX

The birds and beasts within the wood,
The insects, and each creeping thing,

Were now a silent multitude;
Love's work was left unwrought — no brood
Near Peter's house took wing.

XXI

And every neighboring cottager
Stupidly yawned upon the other;
No jackass brayed; no little cur
Cocked up his ears; no man would stir
To save a dying mother.

XXII

Yet all from that charmed district went
But some half-idiot and half-knave,
Who rather than pay any rent
Would live with marvellous content
Over his father's grave.

XXIII

No bailiff dared within that space,
For fear of the dull charm, to enter;
A man would bear upon his face,
For fifteen months in any case,
The yawn of such a venture.

XXIV

Seven miles above — below — around —
This pest of dulness holds its sway;
A ghastly life without a sound;
To Peter's soul the spell is bound —
How should it ever pass away?

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

The Witch of Atlas was published in Mrs. Shelley's edition of the *Posthumous Poems*, 1824. The poem was conceived during a solitary walk from the Baths of San Giuliano, near Pisa, to the top of Monte San Pellegrino, August 12, 1820, and was written August 14, 15 and 16. It was sent to Ollier to be published with Shelley's name, but was not issued. The dedication, omitted in the edition of 1824, was published in the second edition of 1839. A MS., in Shelley's hand, in the possession of the Shelley family, from which Dr. Garnett, *Relics of Shelley*, derived a few corrections, and a transcript in Mrs. Shelley's hand, in the possession of Mr. Townshend Mayer, of which the variations are given by Forman, slightly modify the text. The transcript plainly represents an earlier and inferior state of the poem than the copy followed by Mrs. Shelley in her edition.

TO MARY

ON HER OBJECTING TO THE FOLLOWING POEM UPON THE SCORE OF ITS CONTAINING NO HUMAN INTEREST

I

How, my dear Mary, are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true!
What, though no mice are caught by a young kitten,
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come? Prithee, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

II

What hand would crush the silken-wingèd fly,
The youngest of inconstant April's minions,
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,
Where the swan sings, amid the sun's dominions?
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die,
When day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes, and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

III

To thy fair feet a wingèd Vision came,
Whose date should have been longer than a day,

And o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
  And in thy sight its fading plumes display;
The watery bow burned in the evening flame,
  But the shower fell, the swift sun went his way —
And that is dead. Oh, let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live!

IV

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
  Considering and retouching Peter Bell;
Watering his laurels with the killing tears
  Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to hell
Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
  Of heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers; this well
May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil
The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

V

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
  As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
Clothes for our grandsons — but she matches Peter,
  Though he took nineteen years, and she three days,
In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
  She wears; he, proud as dandy with his stays,
Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
Like King Lear's "looped and windowed raggedness."

VI

If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow
  Scorched by Hell's hyperequatorial climate
Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow:
  A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at;
In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello.
  If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
Can shrive you of that sin, — if sin there be
In love, when it becomes idolatry.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

I

Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learnèd rhyme,
A Lady-Witch there lived on Atlas' mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

II

Her mother was one of the Atlantides;
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of gray rock in which she lay;
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

III

'Tis said, she first was changed into a vapor,
And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,

iii. 1 *first was*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *was first*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.

Like splendor-wingèd moths about a taper,
Round the red west when the sun dies in it;
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit;
Then, into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

IV

Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand — like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went —
Since in that cave a dewy splendor hidden
Took shape and motion; with the living form
Of this embodied Power the cave grew warm.

V

A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty; deep her eyes as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a temple's cloven roof; her hair
Dark; the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

VI

And first the spotted camelopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;

iii. 4 *red*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *dead*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
v. 4 *temple's*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *tempest's*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.

Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes intervolved. All gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame;
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

VII

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know,
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue,
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

VIII

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew;
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teasing the god to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the Lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

IX

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there;
And — though none saw him — through the adamant

vi. 8 *gentleness . . . even*, omit, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air
And through those living spirits, like a want,
He passed out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous Lady all alone, —
And she felt him upon her emerald throne.

X

And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every shepherdess of Ocean's flocks,
Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean, with the brine on his gray locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,
All came, much wondering how the enwombèd rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth;
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

XI

The herdsman and the mountain maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant;
Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt;
Pygmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaurs and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts, and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

xi. 5-7: —

Fauns, Centaurs, Pigmies, and such wild game,
And monophthalmic Polyphemes, who haunt
The pine-hills, flocked.
Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

XII

For she was beautiful; her beauty made
  The bright world dim, and everything beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade;
  No thought of living spirit could abide,
Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
  On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

XIII

Which when the Lady knew, she took her spindle
  And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and
    three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
  The clouds and waves and mountains with; and
    she
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
  In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove —
A shadow for the splendor of her love.

XIV

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
  Were stored with magic treasures — sounds of air
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
  Folded in cells of crystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
  Will never die — yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

xii. 8 *on*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *in*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

XV

And there lay Visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis;
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burden of intensest bliss
It is its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's; and others white, green, gray, and black,
And of all shapes — and each was at her beck.

XVI

And odors in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad, in destined minds.

XVII

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams — or, if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight —
She in her crystal vials did closely keep;

xv. 5 *is its*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *was its*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript; *is their*, Rossetti, *was their*, Dowden.

xvi. 4 *had woven from*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *Wove out of*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said,
The living were not envied of the dead.

XVIII

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
  The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
  Men from the gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice;
  And which might quench the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood, till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above;

XIX

And how all things that seem untamable,
  Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of wisdom's wizard skill;
  Time, earth and fire, the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes, and man's imperial will;
  And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love — let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

XX

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
  To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
  Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;

xvii. 8 *envious*, James Thompson conj.
xx. 1 *works*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *rocks*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
3 *Had changed*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *Transformed*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Carved lamps and chalices, and vials which shone
In their own golden beams — each like a flower
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

XXI

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

XXII

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarlèd heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live forever in the light
Of her sweet presence — each a satellite.

XXIII

"This may not be," the Wizard Maid replied;
"The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean, like a drop of dew,

xxii. 2 *weedy*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *streaming*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Will be consumed — the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust;

XXIV

"And ye with them will perish one by one.
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay, oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must — over me
Your leaves shall glance — the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so — farewell!"

XXV

She spoke and wept; the dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light; a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

XXVI

All day the Wizard Lady sate aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity,
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy

xxiii. 7 *centre*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *mountains*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

xxiv. 2 *sigh*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *weep*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendor of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining Heaven — and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

XXVII

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal-wood, rare gums and cinnamon;
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is;
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon;
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

XXVIII

This Lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain, as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance;
Through the green splendor of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies, and withal did ever keep
The tenor of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

XIX

And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,

xxvii. 6 *upon*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *thereon*, Rossetti.
xxix. 2 *that*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *the*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where, in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim;

XXX

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns; the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and, dreaming still, he crept afar;
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

XXXI

She had a boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardors in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter; from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

XXXII

And others say, that, when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like a horticultural adept,

xxx. 8 *level*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *liquid*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

XXXIII

The plant grew strong and green; the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance; woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veinèd fan,
Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

XXXIV

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain, like a panther tame —
One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit —
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a wingèd thought, —
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

XXXV

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love — all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow,
A living Image, which did far surpass

In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

XXXVI

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
  It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both;
  In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth,
  The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

XXXVII

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
  Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightnings,
  Dyed in the ardors of the atmosphere.
She led her creature to the boiling springs
  Where the light boat was moored, and said,
    "Sit here!"
And pointed to the prow and took her seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

XXXVIII

And down the streams which clove those mountains
    vast,
  Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
  Darkness and odors, and a pleasure hid

xxxvi. 5 *lightly swelled*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1] || *swelled lightly*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824; *swelling lightly with its full growth*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

xxxviii. 1 *the*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *those*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

In melancholy gloom, the pinnace passed;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

XXXIX

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,
When earth over her face night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

XL

And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

XLI

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went;

xxxix. 2 *athwart*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *across*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript, cancelled.

xxxix. 6 *earth*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *night*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

xl. 8 *that*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *the*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles: mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

XLII

And down the earthquaking cataracts, which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled — the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

XLIII

And when the Wizard Lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend,
She called "Hermaphroditus!" and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

XLIV

And it unfurled its heaven-colored pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below,

xli. 3 *on*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *in*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
6 *dancing*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *shallow*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

xlii. 6 *sunbows*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *sunbeams*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendor of intensest rime
With which frost paints the pines in winter time;

XLV

And then it winnowed the Elysian air,
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its ethereal vans; and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI

The water flashed, like sunlight by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains; loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro;
Beneath, the billows, having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

XLVII

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,

xlv. 6 *Breasting*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *Breathing*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
xlvi. 2 *Of* || *Or*, Rossetti conj.

The Lady-Witch in visions could not chain
  Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
  Its storm-outspeeding wings the Hermaphrodite;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamandocana,

XLVIII

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
  Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
With the Antarctic constellations paven,
  Canopus and his crew, lay the Austral lake;
There she would build herself a windless haven
  Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by;

XLIX

A haven, beneath whose translucent floor
  The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which the solid vapors hoar,
  Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and, like a shore
  Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in, with rifts and precipices gray
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

xlvii. 6 *Its*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *His*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.
xlviii. 5 *There*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *When*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

L

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge foamed like a wounded thing,
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke — this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven;

LI

On which that Lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star,
Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are,
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

LII

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits;
In mighty legions, million after million,
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion

l. 6 *wreck*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *fragment*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

LIII

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk ; cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

LIV

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aëry dew
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence ; and now she grew
Pale as that moon lost in the watery night,
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

LV

These were tame pleasures. She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beakèd cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back

lii. 8 *mere*, omit, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
liv. 3 *mountain*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *mountains*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Ride singing through the shoreless air; oft-time
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

LVI

And sometimes to those streams of upper air,
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round,
She would ascend, and win the spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

LVII

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
Egypt and Æthiopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axumé, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleecèd sheep,
His waters on the plain, — and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapor-belted pyramid;

LVIII

By Mœris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms, like bridal-chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,

lv. 8 *roar*, Mrs Shelley, 1824 || *roll*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
lvii. 2 *Where*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *When*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.

Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms — within the brazen doors
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast;

LIX

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased — but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die;
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes, — 'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

LX

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet;
Through fane and palace-court and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile, through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

LXI

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy;
There a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;

lix. 7 *fanes*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *fane*, Mrs. Shelley, 1839[1]. *With tower-crested cities 'twas*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Within, two lovers linkèd innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem; and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

LXII

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song;
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young;
"This," said the Wizard Maiden, "is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

LXIII

And little did the sight disturb her soul.
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake,
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal;
But she in the calm depths her way could take
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide,
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

LXIV

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sun-like gems; and round each temple-court

lxii. 6 *brows*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *brow*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
lxiii. 3 *Where'er*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *Wherein*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
lxiii. 5 *wild*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *wide*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript, 1839[1].

In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep, all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

LXV

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment; they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

LXVI

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits; to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare;
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair;
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

LXVII

Alas, Aurora! what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became gray?
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver Heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,

To any witch who would have taught you it?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

LXVIII

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone;
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
Than now this lady — like a sexless bee
Tasting all blossoms and confined to none;
Among those mortal forms the Wizard-Maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

LXIX

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl;
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and over-arching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

LXX

For on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruining and shook

lxix. 4 *thenceforward*, Boscombe MS. || *henceforward*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript; *thenceforth*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.

lxix. 5 *grave*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *grant*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

lxix. 7 *as*, Boscombe MS. || omit, Mrs. Shelley, 1824, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

lxx. 1 *when*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *that*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.

The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathy nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

LXXI

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life, while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
And fleeting generations of mankind.

LXXII

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake

lxx. 3 *lamps*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *lamp*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
4 *deathy*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *deathly*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
lxxi. 1 *there the body*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *then bodies*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
lxxi. 4 *smiles*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript || *sleep*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824.
lxxii. 2 *less*, omit, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.
4 *desert*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *deserts*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Which the sand covers ; all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap ; the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

LXXIII

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the god Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more ; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down ; they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

LXXIV

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sun-like throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey. Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great emperor when the morning came,
And kissed — alas, how many kiss the same !

LXXV

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism ;

lxxiii. 4 *bid the herald*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *bade the heralds*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

lxxxiii. 5 *doors*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *walls*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

Round the red anvils you might see them stand,
Like Cyclopses in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares; in a band
The gaolers sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis,—much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

LXXVI

And timid lovers who had been so coy
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy — till the tenth moon shone;

LXXVII

And then the Witch would let them take no ill;
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find
The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart — a wide wound, mind from mind —
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

lxxv. 3 *Round the red*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *Around the red hot*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

lxxvi. 4 *inmost*, Mrs. Shelley, 1824 || *utmost*, Mrs. Shelley, transcript.

LXXVIII

These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men, and what she did to sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties
To do her will, and show their subtle slights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter nights
Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

NOTES

NOTES

ROSALIND AND HELEN

Rosalind and Helen, / a Modern Eclogue ; / with / Other Poems : / by / Percy Bysshe Shelley. / London : / Printed for C. and J. Ollier, / Vere Street, Bond Street. / 1819.

Collation : Octavo. Half-title (with advertisements of Shelley's other published poems, and imprint C. H. Reynell, Broadstreet, / Golden Square, London, (on verso), pp. i. ii. ; Title (with blank verso), pp. iii. iv. ; Advertisement, pp. v. vi. ; Contents (with blank verso), pp. vii. viii. ; Fly-title to *Rosalind and Helen / A / Modern Eclogue* / (with blank verso), pp. 1, 2 ; *Rosalind and Helen*, pp. 3–68 ; *Lines written on the Euganean Hills, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, Sonnet-Ozymandias*, pp. 69–92. Four pages of advertisements. Issued in drab wrappers with white printed label lettered lengthwise Rosalind and Helen. A fragment of the poem is among the Boscombe MSS.

NOTES showing the state of other editions and including minor variations beyond what has been already noted.

63 *thee* $1839^{1,2}$.

238 *Sat* 1819, $1839^{1,2}$, Rossetti, Dowden.

405 *which* The emendations are merely plausible. The sentence is a broken one, but within its limits it gives no satisfactory meaning unless it be that there was the thought of death at childbirth, which seems a strained interpretation.

449 *In vain,* — Rossetti.

551 *When* $1839^{1,2}$, Rossetti, Forman, Dowden. The emendation is necessary for the sense.

590 *nursing* Forman conj.

857 *sent,* $1839^{1,2}$, Dowden.

894–901 Compare the slightly different version of these lines in the poem *To William Shelley*, 1818.

932 *when* 1839[1,2], Rossetti, Dowden. Forman's emendation seems reasonable.

1095 *bright* — Rossetti.

1173 *looks* 1839[2], Rossetti.

1209 *rescue* Forman conj., Dowden. The emendation does not help the couplet to express its meaning, which plainly is that she survived several years either being insane without recollection of the loss of Lionel, or without memory of her experience during her illness. The meaning at all events is not that animal life was rescued from sorrow, but that by sinking into a merely animate state of life she was respited from grief.

1230 *bereft*, 1819, 1839[1,2].

1231 dele comma 1819, 1839[1,2].

1240 *wood* Dowden. The emendation is really a correction.

1246 *steep* omit, 1839[1,2].

CONTEMPORARY RECORDS : —

Mrs. Shelley's note (1839[1], iii. 159, 160) : "*Rosalind and Helen* was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside, till I found it ; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned Love, but he shed a grace, borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against, we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secrets of all hearts, and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords in our nature. *Rosalind and Helen* was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the Baths of Lucca."

Shelley (from Bagni di Lucca) to Peacock, August 16, 1818: "I have finished, by taking advantage of a few days of inspiration — which the *Camœnæ* have been lately very backward in conceding — the little poem I began sending to the press in London. Ollier will send you the proofs. Its structure is slight and aëry; its subject ideal. The metre corresponds with the spirit of the poem, and varies with the flow of the feeling." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 453.

Shelley (from Rome) to Peacock, April 6, 1819: "As to the poem now printing, I lay no stress on it one way or the other. The concluding lines are natural.' Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 213.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Hunt, August 15, 1819: "Your kind expressions about my Eclogue gave me great pleasure; indeed, my great stimulus in writing is to have the approbation of those who feel kindly towards me. The rest is mere duty." Hunt, *Lord Byron*, etc., i. 388.

Shelley (from Leghorn), to Ollier, September 6, 1819: "In the *Rosalind and Helen* I see there are some few errors, which are so much the worse because they are errors in the sense. If there should be any danger of a second edition, I will correct them." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 119.

Rosalind and Helen seems to have been suggested, in part, by the relation of Mrs. Shelley with a friend of her girlhood, Isabel Baxter, who fell away from her early attachment in consequence of Mrs. Shelley's flight with Shelley in July, 1814, and was afterward reconciled with her. (Dowden, *Life*, ii. 130, 131.) Forman (Type Facsimile of the original edition, Shelley Society's Publications, Second Series, No. 17, Introduction) discusses the matter at length, together with the reflection of political events in England possibly to be detected in the poem. It was noticed in *Blackwood's*, June, 1819.

JULIAN AND MADDALO

Julian and Maddalo is the first title in Mrs. Shelley's edition of the *Posthumous Poems*, 1824. It is there dated May, 1819. In her first collected edition, 1839[1], it appears among the *Poems of 1820*; but, in the second, 1839[2], it is properly

placed among the *Poems of 1818*. It was written at Este in the late summer. The date, May, 1819, is the date of the MS. then completed, and represents the time when the poem had received its last revision. The MS. sent to Hunt, of which the variations are given from Forman in the footnotes to this edition, "is written on gilt-edged leaves apparently removed from a pocket-book, and measuring only $3\frac{1}{16}$ inches by $2\frac{9}{16}$." A specimen-leaf is facsimiled by Forman. Among the Boscombe MSS. is a fair draft in ink. The Harvard MS. volume shows by its index that pp. 1–30 were occupied by the same poem, there designated *Maddalo and Julian;* but these pages have been cut out. These are the sources of the text.

NOTES showing the state of other editions and including minor variations beyond what has been already noted. $1839^{1,2}$ follows 1824 both in the footnotes and below where no variation is mentioned.

41 *vales* Miss Blind conj. The conjecture is a correction from Milton.
69 *a* $1839^{1,2}$.
99 *an* 1824, *a* $1838^{1,2}$.
124 *an* 1824, *a* $1839^{1,2}$.
126 *do;* 1824.
158 *passed* $1839^{1,2}$.
171 *Which* Rossetti, Dowden.
173 *of*, 1824, Rossetti, Dowden.
175 *minds* Rossetti.
179 *Utopian* $1839^{1,2}$.
191 *their* Rossetti, Forman, Dowden.
221 *The* Rossetti.
226 *on a sudden who* $1839^{1,2}$.
249 *nor* 1839.
266 *interrupted now* 1824.
282 *apart*, 1824.
284 *passion:* 1824.
310 *nor pain nor* $1839^{1,2}$.
356 *hath* Rossetti, Dowden.

414 *dies:* 1824.
474 *my* 1824, Rossetti, Dowden.
510 *my care* 1839[2].
517 *was* 1839[2].
579 *crowds or* Rossetti, Dowden.
648 *from the* 1839[1,2].

CONTEMPORARY RECORDS: —

Mrs. Shelley's Note (1839[2], p. 229): "I Capuccini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses; it was situated on the very overhanging brow of a low hill at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant; a vine-trellised walk, a *pergola*, as it is called in Italian, led from the hall door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the *Prometheus;* and here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote *Julian and Maddalo;* a slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chestnut wood at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode."

Shelley (from Venice) to Mrs. Shelley, August 23, 1818: "He [Byron] took me in his gondola across the laguna to a long sandy island, which defends Venice from the Adriatic. When we disembarked, we found his horses waiting for us, and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. He said that if he had been in England at the time of the Chancery affair, he would have moved

heaven and earth to have prevented such a decision. We talked of literary matters, his Fourth Canto [Childe Harold], which he says is very good, and indeed he repeated some stanzas of great energy to me." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 136.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Leigh Hunt, August 15, 1819: "I send you a little poem to give to Ollier for publication, but *without my name*. Peacock will correct the proofs. I wrote it with the idea of offering it to the *Examiner*, but I find it is too long. It was composed last year at Este; two of the characters you will recognize; and the third is also in some degree a painting from nature, but, with respect to time and place, ideal. You will find the little piece, I think, in some degree consistent with your own ideas of the manner in which poetry ought to be written. I have employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other, whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms. I use the word *vulgar* in its most extensive sense. The vulgarity of rank and fashion is as gross in its way as that of poverty, and its cant terms equally expressive of base conceptions, and, therefore, equally unfit for poetry. Not that the familiar style is to be admitted in the treatment of a subject wholly ideal, or in that part of any subject which relates to common life, where the passion, exceeding a certain limit, touches the boundaries of that which is ideal. Strong passion expresses itself in metaphor, borrowed from objects alike remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness. But what am I about? If my grandmother sucks eggs, was it I who taught her?

"If *you* would really correct the proof, I need not trouble Peacock, who, I suppose, has enough. Can you take it as a compliment that I prefer to trouble you?

I do not particularly wish this poem to be known as mine; but, at all events, I would not put my name to it. I leave you to judge whether it is best to throw it into the fire, or to publish it. So much for self — *self*, that burr that will stick to one." Hunt, *Correspondence*, i. 137, 138.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, December 15, 1819: "Have you seen my poem *Julian and Maddalo?* Suppose you print that in the manner of Hunt's *Hero and Leander;* for I mean to write three other poems, the scenes of which will be laid at Rome, Florence and Naples, but the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities, as that of this was." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 123.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, May 14, 1820: "If I had even intended to publish *Julian and Maddalo* with my name, yet I would not print it with *Prometheus*. It would not harmonize. It is an attempt in a different style, in which I am not yet sure of myself — a *sermo pedestris* way of treating human nature, quite opposed to the idealisms of that drama. If you print *Julian and Maddalo*, I wish it to be printed in some unostentatious form, accompanied with the fragment of *Athanase*, and exactly in the manner in which I sent it; and I particularly desire that my name be not annexed to the first edition of it in any case." *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 138, 139.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, November 10, 1820: "I send some poems to be added to the pamphlet of *Julian and Maddalo*. [*Julian and Maddalo and Other Poems* had been announced as in press at the end of the sheet of Ollier's advertisements in *Prometheus Unbound*, 1820.] I think you have some other smaller poems belonging to that collection, and I believe you know that I do not wish my name to be printed on the title-page, though I have no objection to my being known as the author. . . . The *Julian and Maddalo* and the accompanying poems are all my saddest verses raked up into one heap. I mean to mingle more smiles with my tears in future." *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 139, 140.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Miss Clairmont, January 2, 1821: "All your wishes have been attended to respecting *Julian and Maddalo*, which never was intended for publication." [Dowden suggests that Miss Clairmont objected to the publication on account of the mention of Allegra.] Dowden, ii. 385.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, February 22, 1821: I suppose *Julian and Maddalo* is published. If not, do not add the *Witch of Atlas* to that peculiar piece of writing." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 154.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Prometheus Unbound / A Lyrical Drama / in Four Acts / with Other Poems / by / Percy Bysshe Shelley / Audisne haec, amphiarae, sub terram abdite ? / London / C. and J. Ollier Vere Street Bond Street / 1820.

Collation: Octavo. Half-title (with advertisements of Shelley's published poems, and imprint, Marchant, Printer, Ingram-Court, Fenchurch-Street, London, on verso) pp. i. ii.; Title (with blank verso) pp. iii. iv.; Contents (with blank verso) pp. v. vi.; Preface, pp. vii.–xv.; Fly-title to *Prometheus Unbound* (with *Dramatis Personæ* on verso) pp. 17, 18; *Prometheus Unbound*, pp. 19–153; Fly-title to *Miscellaneous Poems* (with blank verso) pp. 155, 156; *The Sensitive Plant, A Vision of the Sea, Ode to Heaven, An Exhortation, Ode to the West Wind, An Ode, written October*, 1819, *before the Spaniards had recovered their Liberty, The Cloud, To a Skylark, Ode to Liberty*, pp. 157–222; advertisements of Ollier's publications, two pages, with imprint repeated at foot. Issued in boards, with white paper label on back, lettered Prometheus / Unbound / 9s.

An incomplete MS. is among the Boscombe MSS., and some corrections derived from it were published by Miss Blind in the *Westminster Review*, July, 1870.

NOTES showing the state of other editions and including minor variations beyond what has been already noted. 1839[1] incorporates Shelley's list of errata, and Mrs. Shelley may have added other corrections of her own; the authority of Shelley for her text is, so far, open to doubt in any particular case.

I. 73 *me. Speak!* Greenwood conj.
137 *love*, i. e. *dost love* (Swinburne), but Forman construes, *I love*.
192 *dear* Mrs. Shelley, 1853.
414 *pain?* all editions.
491 *agony.* "
526–531 Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Fury, Rossetti.

I. 639 *woe-illumined* 1839[1,2], Rossetti.
687 *those* 1820, 1839[1,2].
712 *Between.* The meaning is between arch and sea.
774 *silent* 1839[1,2].

II. Scene *lonely* 1839[1,2].
i. 122 *morn* 1839[1,2].
153 *by*, all editions.
155 *fire*, " "
165 *Amid* or *Among* Rossetti conj. *Around* meaning *in the neighborhood of* is perfectly good English, and used by Shelley. See *Concordance.*
171 *Spirits* 1839[1,2].
ii. 25 *noonday*, 1820, 1839[1,2].
50 *destinied soft* 1820.
53 *streams* 1839[2].
60 *hurrying as* 1820.
71 *the* omit 1839[1,2].
87 *on* 1839[1,2].
iv. 4 *sun.* Rossetti conj.
5 *Shapeless*, " "
12 line missing, Rossetti and Swinburne conj. The difficulty is caused by a rapid change of construction, the sense being entirely clear.
100 *reigns* Forman.
v. 95 *and on* Forman, Dowden. The emendation corrects a faultless line merely to make it agree with stanzaic structure, and like all metrical emendations in a poet so accustomed to irregular and original melody as Shelley, is open to the gravest doubt.

III. i. 13 *might* Forman.
20 *distant* 1820.
69 *then* omit 1820.
ii. 22 *many peopled* 1820, 1839[1,2].
70 *is* omit 1839[2], Rossetti. The word is naturally slurred in the metre, and the movement of the line is not more roughened than was customary with Shelley.
102 *unwitting* 1820.

III. iii. 126 *that* 1839[2].

iv. 110 *pasturing on* Forman's conjecture is unnecessary, the phrase being a recognized poetic idiom.

121 *light* 1820.

172 *conquerors ; mouldering round* Rossetti's emendation is plausible, but the sense of the text is complete and plain. The emblems of Power and Faith stand in the new world unregarded and mouldering memorials of a dead past, just as the Egyptian monuments imaged to a later time than their own a vanished monarchy and religion ; the fact that these monuments survived the new race and last into our still later time is an unnecessary and subordinate incident inserted because it appealed to Shelley's imagination.

IV. 58 *have* 1820, 1839[1,2].

61 *a* 1839[1,2].

221 *Its feathers are as plumes* Rossetti conj. The conjecture is a metrical correction for the sake of a regularity that Shelley did not seek for, the line as it stands being more characteristic.

225 *string* 1820.

242 *and green* Forman, Dowden. Rossetti's emendation is again a metrical correction, for which there is no authority in Shelley's habitual versification. The vowels and pause of the first half line, lengthening its time, the redundant syllable at the end and the five strong stresses, certainly make together a full line, and its movement heightens the effect, both musically and rhetorically, while as read with the inserted *and* the line is toned down and tamed to the blank-verse monotone.

274 *spoke* 1820.

276 *lightenings* Rossetti.

282 *poured* 1820.

325–331 The draft of these lines is given on a page of the *Facsimile of the MS. of The Mask of Anarchy,*

much cancelled and too much confused to be properly rendered except by facsimile.

355 *the* omit 1820.

387 *light* 1839[1,2].

432 *infrozen* Rossetti.

483 *or chameleon* 1839[2], Rossetti, Dowden.

493, 494 add to preceding speech, Rossetti. The emendation is, again, a correction by standards that Shelley did not observe. Compare the passage with the draft for it among the FRAGMENTS.

554 *is* omit 1839[1].

559 *dead* Forman, Dowden.

575 *flatter* 1820.

CONTEMPORARY RECORDS : —

Mrs. Shelley's Note 1839[1], ii. 129–140 : "On the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate ; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December, 1817, he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying [Shelley (from Marlow) to Godwin, December 7, 1817] : —

"'My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement, that only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack, and although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its exist-

ence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek, and that not for my own sake ; I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness — but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honor — and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.'

"In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached, but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country : and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

"He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley ; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of nature and art in that divine land.

"The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical Dramas. One was the story of Tasso : of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the book of Job, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the *Prometheus Unbound*. The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, aud the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder

and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods — such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

"We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March, 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's *Symposium*. But though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the *Prometheus*. At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry, and delicacy, and truth of description, which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

"At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

"The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

"'Brought death into the world and all our woe.'

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he

entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on, was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all, even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity ; a victim full of fortitude and hope, and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus ; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture and set him free, and Thetis was married to Peleus the father of Achilles.

"Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son, greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture, till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of

the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus — she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation, such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty Parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth — the guide of our planet through the realms of sky — while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

"Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

"More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real — to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

"I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which shows at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explains his apprehension of those 'minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether

relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us,' which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to *The Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"'In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image, —

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις :

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry, yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed : —

"' Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought.'

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνοις had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical, instead of an absolute sense, as we say "ways and means," and wanderings, for error and confusion ; but they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet ; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city, as Œdipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol, a world within a world, which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do, searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface.'

"In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of imagery ; for though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and coloring which sprung from his own genius.

"In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on *The Revolt of Islam*. The tone of the composition is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this — it fills the mind as the most charming picture — we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

"cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds,
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer, urging their flight.
Some looked behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

"Through the whole Poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

"England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which made him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion, such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own, with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before; and as he wandered among the ruins, made one with nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the *Prometheus* which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own. He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his

labors, and he wrote from Rome [Shelley to Peacock, April 6, 1819], 'My *Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted, and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts.'

"I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata, written by Shelley himself."

["*Prometheus* of Æschylus (Greek)" is the second title in the list of books read by Shelley, in 1816, as entered in Mrs. Shelley's Notebook.]

Mrs. Shelley's Journal, March 26, 1818, The Passage of Les Echelles (written by Shelley): "The rocks, which cannot be less than a thousand feet in perpendicular height, sometimes overhang the road on each side, and almost shut out the sky. The scene is like that described in the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. Vast rifts and caverns in the granite precipices, wintry mountains within and snow above; the loud sounds of unseen waters within the caverns, and walls of toppling rocks, only to be scaled, as he describes, by the winged chariots of the ocean nymphs." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 111, 112.

Shelley (from Padua) to Mrs. Shelley (at Este), September 22, 1818: "Bring . . . the sheets of *Prometheus Unbound*, which you will find numbered from 1 to 26 on the table of the pavilion." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 140.

Shelley (from Este) to Peacock, October 8, 1818: "I have been writing — and indeed have just finished the first Act of a lyric and classical drama, to be called *Prometheus Unbound*. Will you tell me what there is in Cicero about a drama supposed to have been written by Æschylus under this title?" Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 144.

Shelley (from Naples) to Peacock, January 26, 1819: "My first Act of *Prometheus* is complete, and I think you would like it." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 183.

Shelley (from Rome) to Peacock, April 6, 1819. [See Mrs. Shelley's Note, above.]

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, July, 1819: "My

Prometheus, though ready, I do not send till I know more." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 220.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Ollier, September 6, 1819: "My *Prometheus*, which has been long finished, is now being transcribed, and will soon be forwarded to you for publication. It is, in my judgment, of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before it. . . . The *Prometheus* you will be so good as to print as usual." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 118.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, September 21, 1819: "I have sent you my *Prometheus*, which I do not wish to be sent to Ollier for publication until I write to that effect. Mr. Gisborne will bring it." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 467.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Hunt, September 27, 1819: "I have sent my *Prometheus* to P.; if you ask him for it, he will show it to you. I think it will please you." Hunt, *Correspondence*, i. 151.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, October 15, 1819: "The *Prometheus*, a poem in my best style, whatever that may amount to, will arrive with it [the Italian edition of *The Cenci*, 250 copies, in a box], but in MS., which you can print and publish in the season. It is the most perfect of my productions." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 121.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, December 15, 1819: "Let *Prometheus* be printed without delay. You will receive the additions, which Mrs. S[helley] is now transcribing, in a few days. It has already been read to many persons. My *Prometheus* is the best thing I ever wrote." *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 122, 123.

Shelley (from Florence) to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, December 23, 1819: "I have just finished an additional Act to *Prometheus*, which Mary is now transcribing, and which will be enclosed for your inspection before it is transmitted to the bookseller." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 260, 261.

Mrs. Shelley (from Florence) to Mrs. Gisborne, December 28, 1819: "I am glad you are pleased with the *Prometheus*. The last Act, though very beautiful, is certainly the most mystic of the four." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 129.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, March 6, 1820: "I do not hear that you have received *Prometheus* and *The Cenci;* I therefore think it safest to tell you how and when to get them, if you have not yet done so. Give the bill of lading Mr. Gisborne sent you to a broker in the city, whom you employ to get the package, and to pay the duty on the unbound books. The ship sailed in the middle of December, and will assuredly have arrived long before now. *Prometheus Unbound*, I must tell you, is my favorite poem; I charge you, therefore, especially to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper. . . . I think if I can judge by its merits, the *Prometheus* cannot sell beyond twenty copies." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 137.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, March 13, 1820: "I am anxious to hear that you have received the parcel from Leghorn, and to learn what you are doing with the *Prometheus*. If it can be done without great difficulty, I should be very glad that the *revised* sheets might be sent by the post to me at Leghorn. It might be divided into four partitions, sending me four or five sheets at once." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 137.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, May 14, 1820: "As to the printing of the *Prometheus*, be it as you will. But, in this case, I shall repose or trust in your care respecting the correction of the press; especially in the lyrical parts, where a minute error would be of much consequence. Mr. Gisborne will revise it; he heard it recited, and will therefore more readily seize any error." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 138.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, May 26, 1820: "I write to you thus early because I have determined to accept of your kind offer about the correction of *Prometheus*. The bookseller makes difficulties about sending the proofs to me, and to whom else can I so well entrust what I am so much interested in having done well; and to whom would I prefer to owe the recollection of an additional kindness done to me? I enclose you two little papers of corrections and additions. I do not think you will find any difficulty in interpolating them into their proper places." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 227.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, July 12, 1820: "I

make bold to write to you on the news that you are correcting my *Prometheus*, for which I return thanks. . . . I enclose two additional poems [*Ode to Liberty* and one other poem unknown] to be added to those printed at the end." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 469.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Medwin, July 20, 1820: "I . . . am encouraged to wish to present you with *Prometheus Unbound*, a drama also, but a composition of a totally different character [from *The Cenci*]. . . . *Prometheus Unbound* is in th merest spirit of ideal poetry, and not, as the name would indicate, a mere imitation of the Greek drama; or, indeed, if I have been successful, is it an imitation of anything. But you will judge. I hear it is just printed." Trelawny, *Records*, ii. 37.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Keats, July 27, 1820: "*Prometheus Unbound* I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter." *Westminster Review*, April, 1841.

Horace Smith to Shelley, September 4, 1820: "I got from Ollier last week a copy of the *Prometheus Unbound*, which is certainly a most original, grand and occasionally sublime work, evincing, in my opinion, a higher order of talent than any of your previous productions; and yet, contrary to your own estimation, I must say I prefer *The Cenci*, because it contains a deep and sustained human interest, of which we feel a want in the other. Prometheus himself certainly touches us nearly, but we see little of him after his liberation; and, though I have no doubt it will be more admired than anything you have written, I question whether it will be so much read as *The Cenci*." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 145.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Peacock, November 15 [8 ?], 1820: "Thank you for your kindness in correcting *Prometheus*, which I am afraid gave you a great deal of trouble." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 470.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, November 10, 1820: Mr. Gisborne has sent me a copy of the *Prometheus*, which is certainly most beautifully printed. It is to be regretted that the errors of the press are so numerous, and in many respects so destructive of the sense of a species of poetry which, I fear, even without this disadvantage, very few will

understand or like. I shall send you the list of errata in a day or two." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 139.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, January 20, 1821 : "I send you . . . and the errata of *Prometheus*, which I ought to have sent long since — a formidable list, as you will see." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 135.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, June 8, 1821 : "Such errors as *assist* the obscurity of the *Prometheus*." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 156.

Trelawny *Records* (I. xv. 118) : "Shelley said, 'If that is not durable poetry, tried by the severest test, I do not know what is. It is a lofty subject, not inadequately treated, and should not perish with me.' . . . 'My friends say my *Prometheus* is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery. It may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama. It is original ; and cost me severe mental labor. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble."

Prometheus Unbound was noticed in the *London Literary Gazette*, September 9, 1820, and the *Quarterly*, December, 1821.

THE CENCI

The Cenci. / A Tragedy, / in Five Acts. / *By* Percy B. Shelley. / Italy. / Printed for C. and J. Ollier / Vere Street, Bond Street. / London. / 1819.

Collation : Octavo. Title (with blank verso), pp. i. ii. ; Dedication, pp. iii.–v. ; Preface, pp. vii.–xiv. ; Fly-title to *The Cenci* (with *Dramatis Personæ* on verso), pp. 1, 2 ; *The Cenci*, pp. 3–104. Issued in boards, with white printed label lettered The / Cenci / 4s. 6d. bds.

The Cenci / A Tragedy / in Five Acts / By / Percy Bysshe Shelley / Second Edition / London / C. and J. Ollier Vere Street Bond Street / 1821.

Collation : Octavo. Title (with imprint, London / Printed by C. H. Reynell / Broad Street, Golden Square, on verso), pp. iii. iv. ; Dedication, pp. v. vi. ; Preface, pp. vii.–xvii.; Fly-title to *The Cenci* (with *Dramatis Personæ* on

verso), pp. 1, 2 ; *The Cenci*, pp. 3–103 ; imprint slightly different and with date 1821, p. 104. Issued in drab wrappers with white printed label on side lettered The Cenci / A Tragedy / Second Edition / 4s. 6d.

A list of Errata in the first edition, from the MS. of Mrs. Shelley, is published by Forman, *The Shelley Library*, 1886. The changes indicated were made in the second edition. No MS. is known.

Notes showing the state of other editions including minor variations beyond what has been already noted.

I. i. 13 *So* 1839[1,2], Rossetti.
26 *me* omit, 1839[1,2].
100 *And but that there yet* Forman, Dowden. *But that there yet* 1839[1,2], Rossetti.
131 *have* 1839[1,2].
140 *shall* 1839[1,2].
ii. 24 *yet* Rossetti.
iii. 132 *not* Rossetti.
II. i. 113 *and* omit 1839[1,2].
ii. 77 *the truth* 1839[1,2].
III. i. 140 *or* 1839[1].
ii. 17 *oil* 1819, 1839[1,2], Forman, Dowden.
75 *to* omit 1819.
91 *Giacomo : May all be done* Rossetti.
IV. iv. 6 *and wrathful* 1839[1,2].
V. i. 58 *with your* 1839[1,2].
ii. 32 *dread* 1839[1,2].
165 *pain* 1839[1,2].
iii. 5 *Ah* 1839[1,2].
iv. 105 *yawns* 1819, 1839[1,2].

Contemporary Records : —

Mrs. Shelley's Note, 1839[1], ii. 272–276 : "The sort of mistake that Shelley made, as to the extent of his own genius and powers, which led him deviously at first, but lastly into the direct track that enabled him fully to develop them, is a curious instance of his modesty of feeling, and of the meth-

ods which the human mind uses at once to deceive itself, and yet, in its very delusion, to make its way out of error into the path which nature has marked out as its right one. He often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy — he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations, that I should cultivate any talent I possessed to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers ; and, above all, though at that time not exactly aware of the fact, I was far too young to have any chance of succeeding, even moderately, in a species of composition that requires a greater scope of experience in, and sympathy with, human passion than could then have fallen to my lot, or than any perhaps, except Shelley, ever possessed, even at the age of twenty-six, at which he wrote *The Cenci.*

"On the other hand, Shelley most erroneously conceived himself to be destitute of this talent. He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming and following up a story or plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination — it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others — though he laid great store by it, as the proper framework to support the sublimest efforts of poetry. He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract — too fond of the theoretical and the ideal, to succeed as a tragedian. It perhaps is not strange that I shared this opinion with himself, for he had hitherto shown no inclination for, nor given any specimen of his powers in framing and supporting the interest of a story, either in prose or verse. Once or twice, when he attempted such, he had speedily thrown it aside, as being even disagreeable to him as an occupation.

"The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I., and he had written to me [Shelley (from Este) to Mrs. Shelley, September 22, 1818] : 'Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of *St. Leon* begins with this proud and true sentiment, "There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute." Shakespeare was only a human being.' These words were written in

1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of *The Cenci*. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found ; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence ; but I entreated him to write it instead ; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth, never, alas ! through his untimely death, worked to its depths — his richly-gifted mind.

" We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss. Some friends of ours were residing in the neighborhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. Our villa was situated in the midst of a *podere ;* the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and at night the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fireflies flashed from among the myrtle hedges : — nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

" At the top of the house there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed. This one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed ; this Shelley made

his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water spouts, that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward, and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of *The Cenci*. He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady [Mrs. Gisborne] living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius; but it shows his judgment and originality, that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of *The Cenci;* and there is no trace of his new studies, except in that passage to which he himself alludes, as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio*.

"Shelley wished *The Cenci* to be acted. He was not a play-goer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times; she was then in the zenith of her glory, and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote, and when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend in London: —

"[Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, July, 1819]: 'The object of the present letter is to ask a favor of you. I have written a tragedy on the subject of a story well known in

Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favorably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions ; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded ; the chief subject of which I have touched very delicately ; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed, as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question, as to whether such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection, considering, first, that the facts are matter of history and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.

" ' I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present ; founding my hopes on this, that as a composition it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of *Remorse ;* that the interest of its plot is incredibly greater and more real, and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favor me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire, to my own purposes.

" ' What I want you to do, is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neil, and it might even seem written for her, (God forbid that I should ever see her play it — it would tear my nerves to pieces,) and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male

character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play — that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor.'

"[I think you know some of the people of that theatre; or, at least, some one who knows them, and when you have read the play, you may say enough perhaps to induce them not to reject it without consideration — but of this, perhaps, if I may judge from the tragedies which they have accepted, there is no danger at any rate.

"Write to me as soon as you can on this subject, because it is necessary that I should present it, or, if rejected by the theatre, print it this coming season; lest somebody else should get hold of it, as the story, which now exists only in manuscript, begins to be generally known among the English. The translation which I send you is to be prefixed to the play, together with a print of Beatrice. I have a copy of her picture by Guido, now in the Colonna palace at Rome — the most beautiful creature you can conceive.

"Of course, you will not show the manuscript to any one — and write to me by return of post, at which time the play will be ready to be sent." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 219, 220.]

"The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to insure its correctness; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text, when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

"Universal approbation soon stamped *The Cenci* as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said: 'I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words*.' There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding from vehement struggle to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly,

to the elevated dignity of calm suffering, joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful, that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary, but preceding poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph ; and often after he was earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favor, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way ; and even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments with regard to human nature and its destiny, a desire to diffuse which was the master passion of his soul."

[Dowden (ii. 277) states, on the authority of the *Journal*, that the MS. mentioned above was put into Shelley's hands at Leghorn in May, 1818, and copied, May 25, by Mrs. Shelley. This was translated by Shelley and sent to Peacock " to be prefixed to the play," in the London edition.]

RELATION OF THE DEATH OF THE FAMILY OF THE CENCI.

The most wicked life which the Roman nobleman, Francesco Cenci, led while he lived in this world, not only occasioned his own ruin and death, but also that of many others, and brought down the entire destruction of his house. This nobleman was the son of Monsignore Cenci, who, having been treasurer during the pontificate of Pius V., left im-

mense wealth to Francesco, his only son. From this inheritance alone he enjoyed an income of 160,000 crowns, and he increased his fortune by marrying an exceedingly rich lady, who died after she had given birth to seven unfortunate children. He then contracted a second marriage with Lucretia Petroni, a lady of a noble Roman family ; but he had no children by her. Sodomy was the least, and atheism the greatest, of the vices of Francesco ; as is proved by the tenor of his life ; for he was three times accused of sodomy, and paid the sum of 100,000 crowns to government, in commutation of the punishment rightfully awarded to this crime : and concerning his religion, it is sufficient to state, that he never frequented any church ; and although he caused a small chapel, dedicated to the apostle St. Thomas, to be built in the court of his palace, his intention in so doing was to bury there all his children, whom he cruelly hated. He had driven the eldest of these, Giacomo, Cristofero, and Rocco, from the paternal mansion, while they were yet too young to have given him any real cause of displeasure. He sent them to the university of Salamanca, but, refusing to remit to them there the money necessary for their maintenance, they desperately returned home. They found that this change only increased their misery, for the hatred and contempt of their father towards them was so aggravated, that he refused to dress or maintain them, so that they were obliged to have recourse to the Pope, who caused Cenci to make them a fit allowance, with which they withdrew from his house.

The third imprisonment of Francesco for his accustomed crime of sodomy, occurred at this time, and his sons took occasion to supplicate the Pope to punish their father, and to remove so great a monster from his family. The Pope, though before inclined to condemn Francesco to the deserved punishment of death, would not do it at the request of his sons, but permitted him again to compound with the law, by paying the accustomed penalty of 100,000 crowns. The hatred of Francesco towards his sons was augmented by this proceeding on their parts ; he cursed them ; and often also struck and ill-treated his daughters. The eldest of these,

being unable any longer to support the cruelty of her father, exposed her miserable condition to the Pope, and supplicated him either to marry her, according to his choice, or to shut her up in a monastery, that by any means she might be liberated from the cruel oppression of her parent. Her prayer was heard, and the Pope, in pity to her unhappiness, bestowed her in marriage to Signore Carlo Gabrielli, one of the first gentlemen of the city of Gabbio, and obliged Francesco to give her a fitting dowry of some thousand crowns.

Francesco, fearing that his youngest daughter would, when she grew up, follow the example of her sister, bethought himself how to hinder this design, and for that purpose shut her up alone in an apartment of the palace, where he himself brought her food, so that no one might approach her ; and imprisoned her in this manner for several months, often inflicting on her blows with a stick.

In the meantime ensued the death of two of his sons, Rocco and Cristofero — one being assassinated by a surgeon, and the other by Paolo Corso, while he was attending mass. The inhuman father showed every sign of joy on hearing this news, saying that nothing would exceed his pleasure if all his children died, and that when the grave should receive the last he would, as a demonstration of joy, make a bonfire of all that he possessed. And on the present occasion, as a further sign of his hatred, he refused to pay the smallest sum towards the funeral expenses of his murdered sons. Francesco carried his wicked debauchery to such an excess, that he caused girls (of whom he constantly kept a number in his house), and also common courtesans, to sleep in the bed of his wife, and often endeavored, by force and threats, to debauch his daughter Beatrice, who was now grown up, and exceedingly beautiful. He gave her more liberty in his palace, and was not ashamed to seek her naked in her bed, showing himself thus with his courtesans, and making her witness of all that could pass between them and him. He tried to persuade the poor girl, by an enormous heresy, that children born of the commerce of a father with his daughter were all saints, and that the saints who ob-

tained the highest places in Paradise had been thus born. Beatrice's resistance of his infamous desires was punished by blows and ill treatment.

Beatrice, finding it impossible to continue to live in so miserable a manner, followed the example of her sister; she sent a well-written supplication to the Pope, imploring him to exercise his authority in withdrawing her from the violence and cruelty of her father. But this petition, which might, if listened to, have saved this unfortunate girl from an early death, produced not the least effect. It was afterwards found among the collection of memorials, and it is pretended that it never came before the Pope.

Francesco, having discovered this attempt on the part of his daughter, became more enraged, and redoubled his tyranny; confining with rigor not only Beatrice, but also his wife. At length, these unhappy women, finding themselves, without hope of relief, driven by desperation, resolved to plan his death.

The Palace Cenci was sometimes visited by a Monsignore Guerra — a young man of handsome person and attractive manners, and of that facile character which might easily be induced to become a partner in any action, good or evil, as it might happen. His countenance was pleasing, and his person tall and well proportioned; he was somewhat in love with Beatrice, and well acquainted with the turpitude of Francesco's character, and was hated by him on account of the familiar intercourse which subsisted between him and the children of this unnatural father: for this reason he timed his visits with caution, and never came to the house but when he knew that Francesco was absent. He was moved to a lively compassion of the state of Lucretia and Beatrice, who often related their increasing misery to him, and his pity was forever fed and augmented by some new tale of tyranny and cruelty. In one of these conversations Beatrice let fall some words which plainly indicated that she and her mother-in-law contemplated the murder of their tyrant, and Monsignore Guerra not only showed approbation of their design, but also promised to coöperate with them in their undertaking. Thus stimulated, Beatrice communi-

cated the design to her eldest brother, Giacomo, without whose concurrence it was impossible that they should succeed. This latter was easily drawn into consent, since he was utterly disgusted with his father, who ill-treated him, and refused to allow him a sufficient support for his wife and children.

The apartments of Monsignore Guerra were the place in which the circumstances of the crime about to be committed were concerted and determined on. Here Giacomo, with the understanding of his sister and mother-in-law, held various consultations, and finally resolved to commit the murder of Francesco to two of his vassals, who had become his inveterate enemies ; one called Marzio, and the other Olimpio : the latter, by means of Francesco, had been deprived of his post as castellan of the Rock of Petrella.

It was already well known that Francesco, with the permission of Signor Marzio di Colonna, baron of that feud, had resolved to retire to Petrella, and to pass the summer there with his family. Some banditti of the kingdom of Naples were hired, and were instructed to lie in wait in the woods about Petrella, and, upon advice being given them of the approach of Francesco, to seize upon him. This scheme was so arranged that, although the robbers were only to seize and take off Francesco, yet that his wife and children should not be suspected of being accomplices in the act. But the affair did not succeed ; for as the banditti were not informed of his approach in time enough, Francesco arrived safe and sound at Petrella. They were obliged therefore to form some new scheme to obtain the end which every day made them more impatient to effect ; for, Francesco still persisted in his wicked conduct. He, being an old man, above seventy years of age, never quitted the castle ; therefore no use could be made of the banditti, who were still secreted in the environs. It was determined, therefore, to accomplish the murder in Francesco's own house.

Marzio and Olimpio were called to the castle ; and Beatrice, accompanied by her mother-in-law, conversed with them from a window during the night-time, when her father slept. She ordered them to repair to Monsignore Guerra with a

note, in which they were desired to murder Francesco, in consideration of a reward of a thousand crowns: a third to be given them before the act, by Monsignore Guerra, and the other two thirds, by the ladies themselves, after the deed should be accomplished. Having consented to this agreement, they were secretly admitted into the castle the 8th of September, 1598; but because this day was the anniversary of the birth of the Blessed Virgin, the Signora Lucretia, held back by her veneration for so holy a time, desired, with the consent of her daughter-in-law, that the execution of the murder should be put off until the following day. They dexterously mixed opium with the drink of Francesco, who, upon going to bed, was soon oppressed by a deep sleep. About midnight his daughter herself led the two assassins into the apartment of her father, and left them there that they might execute the deed they had undertaken, and retired to a chamber close by, where Lucretia remained also, expecting the return of the murderers, and the relation of their success. Soon after the assassins entered, and told the ladies that pity had held them back, and that they could not overcome their repugnance to kill in cold blood a poor, sleeping old man. These words filled Beatrice with anger, and after having bitterly reviled them as cowards and traitors, she exclaimed, "Since you have not courage enough to murder a sleeping man, I will kill my father myself; but your lives shall not be long secure." The assassins, hearing this short but terrible threat, feared that if they did not commit the deed, the tempest would burst over their own heads, took courage, and reëntered the chamber where Francesco slept, and with a hammer drove a nail into his head, making it pass by his eye, and another they drove into his neck. After a few struggles the unhappy Francesco breathed his last. The murderers departed, after having received the remainder of the promised reward; besides which, Beatrice gave Marzio a mantle trimmed with gold. After this the two ladies, after drawing out the two nails, enveloped the body in a fine sheet, and carried it to an open gallery that overhung a garden, and had underneath an elder-tree; from thence they threw it down, so that it

might be believed that Francesco, attending a call of nature, was traversing this gallery, when, being only supported by feeble beams, it had given way, and thus had lost his life.

And so indeed was it believed the next day, when the feigned lamentations of Lucretia and Beatrice, who appeared inconsolable, spread the news of Francesco's death. He received an honorable burial; and his family, after a short stay at the castle, returned to Rome to enjoy the fruits of their crime. They passed some time there in tranquillity; but Divine Justice, which would not allow so atrocious a wickedness to remain hid and unpunished, so ordered it, that the Court of Naples, to which the account of the death of Cenci was forwarded, began to entertain doubts concerning the mode by which he came by it, and sent a commissary to examine the body and to take informations. Among other things, this man discovered a circumstance to the prejudice of the family of the deceased: it appeared that the day after the event of her father's death, Beatrice had given to wash a sheet covered with blood, saying: . . . [For the passage here omitted Forman refers the curious to the original Italian (not the French version), in the *Mélanges publiés pour la Société des Bibliophiles Français*. Paris, 1822.] These informations were instantly forwarded to the Court of Rome; but, nevertheless, several months passed without any step being taken in disfavor of the Cenci family; and, in the mean time, the youngest son of Francesco died, and two only remained of the five that he had had; namely, Giacomo and Bernardo. Monsignore Guerra, having heard of the notification made by the Court of Naples to that of Rome, fearing that Marzio and Olimpio might fall into the hands of justice, and be induced to confess their crime, suddenly hired men to murder them, but succeeded only in assassinating Olimpio at the city of Terni. Marzio, who had escaped this misfortune, soon incurred that of being imprisoned at Naples, where he confessed the whole; and instantly, while the arrival of Marzio at Rome from Naples was expected, Giacomo and Bernardo were arrested, and imprisoned in the Corte Savella, and Lucretia and Beatrice were confined in their own house under a good guard; but afterwards they

were also conducted to the prison where were the brothers. They were here examined, and all constantly denied the crime, and particularly Beatrice, who also denied having given to Marzio the mantle trimmed with gold, of which mention was before made ; and Marzio, overcome and moved by the presence of mind and courage of Beatrice, retracted all that he had deposed at Naples, and, rather than again confess, obstinately died under his torments.

There not being sufficient proof to justify putting the Cenci family to the torture, they were all transferred to Castello, where they remained several months in tranquillity. But, for their misfortune, one of the murderers of Olimpio at Terni fell into the hands of justice ; he confessed that he had been hired to this deed by Monsignore Guerra, who had also commissioned him to assassinate Marzio. Fortunately for this prelate, he received prompt information of the testimony given against him, and was able to hide himself for a time, and to plan his escape, which was very difficult ; for his stature, the fairness and beauty of his countenance, and his light hair, made him conspicuous for discovery. He changed his dress for that of a charcoal-man, blackening his face, and shaving his head ; and thus disguised, driving two asses before him, with some bread and onions in his hands, he passed freely through Rome, under the eyes of the ministers of justice, who sought him everywhere ; and, without being recognized by any one, passed out of one of the gates of the city, where, after a short time, he was met by the sbirri, who were searching the country, and passed unknown by them, not without suffering great fear at his risk of being discovered and arrested : by means of this ingenious disguise he effected his escape to a safe country.

The flight of Monsignore Guerra, joined to the confession of the murderer of Olimpio, aggravated the other proofs so much, that the Cenci were retransferred from Castello to Corte Savella, and were condemned to be put to the torture. The two sons sank vilely under their torments, and became convicted ; Lucretia, being of advanced age, having completed her fiftieth year, and being of a fat make, was not able to resist the torture of the cord, and therefore told all

she knew. But the Signora Beatrice, being young, lively, and strong, neither with good nor ill treatment, with menaces, nor fear of torture, would allow a single word to pass her lips which might inculpate her ; and even, by her lively eloquence, confused the judges who examined her. The Pope, being informed of all that passed by Signor Ulysse Moraci, the judge employed in this affair, became suspicious that the beauty of Beatrice had softened the mind of this judge, and committed the cause to another, who found out another mode of torment, called the torture of the hair ; and when she was already tied under this torture, he brought before her her mother-in-law and brothers. They began altogether to exhort her to confess ; saying, that since the crime had been committed, they must suffer the punishment. Beatrice, after some resistance, said, " So you all wish to die, and to disgrace and ruin our house ? — This is not right ; but since it so pleases you, so let it be : " — and turning to the jailors, she told them to unbind her, and that all the examinations might be brought to her, saying, " That which I ought to confess, that will I confess ; that to which I ought to assent, to that will I assent ; and that which I ought to deny, that will I deny : " — and in this manner she was convicted without having confessed. They were then all unbound ; and, since it was now five months since all had met, they wished to eat together that day : but, three days afterwards, they were again divided — the ladies being left in the Corte Savella, and the brothers being transferred to the dungeons of the Tordinona.

The Pope, after having seen all the examinations, and the entire confessions, ordered that the delinquents should be drawn through the streets at the tails of horses, and afterwards decapitated. Many cardinals and princes interested themselves, and entreated that at least they might be allowed to draw up their defence. The Pope at first refused to comply, replying with severity, and asking these intercessors what defence had been allowed to Francesco, when he had been so barbarously murdered in his sleep ; but afterwards he yielded to allow them twenty-five days' time. The most celebrated Roman advocates undertook to defend the crimi-

nals ; and, at the end of the appointed time, brought their writings to the Pope. The first that spoke was the advocate Nicolas di Angelis ; but the Pope interrupted him angrily in the middle of his discourse, saying that he greatly wondered that there existed in Rome children unnatural enough to kill their father ; and that there should be found advocates depraved enough to defend so horrible a crime. These words silenced all except the advocate Farinacci ; who said, "Holy Father, we have not fallen at your feet to defend the atrocity of the crime, but to save the life of the innocent, when your holiness will deign to hear us." The Pope listened patiently to him for four hours, and then, taking the writings, dismissed them. The advocate Altieri, who was the last to depart, turned back, and, throwing himself at the feet of the Pope, said that his office as advocate to the poor would not allow him to refuse to appear in this affair ; and the Pope replied that he was not surprised at the part that he, but at that which the others had taken. Instead of retiring to rest, he spent the whole night in studying the cause with the Cardinal di San Marcello — noting with great care the most exculpating passages of the writing of the advocate Farinacci ; with which he became so satisfied, that he gave hope of granting a pardon to the criminals ; for the crimes of the father and children were contrasted and balanced in this writing ; and to save the sons, the greater guilt was attributed to Beatrice ; and thus, by saving the mother-in-law, the daughter might the more easily escape, who was dragged, as it were, to the committing so enormous a crime by the cruelty of her father. The Pope, therefore, that the criminals might enjoy the benefit of time, ordered them again to be confined in secret. But since, by the high dispensation of Providence, it was resolved that they should incur the just penalty of parricide, it so happened, that at this time Paolo Santa Croce killed his mother in the town of Subiaco, because she refused to give up her inheritance to him. And the Pope, upon the occurrence of this second crime of this nature, resolved to punish those guilty of the first ; and the more so, because the matricide Santa Croce had escaped from the vengeance of the law by flight. The

Pope returned to Monte Cavallo the 6th of May, that he might consecrate the next morning, in the neighboring church of S. Maria degli Angeli, the Cardinal Diveristiana, appointed by him to be bishop of Olumbre, on the 3d of May of the same year, 1599 : on the 10th of May he called into his presence Monsignore Ferrante Taverna, governor of Rome, and said to him, "I give up into your hands the Cenci cause, that you may as soon as you can execute the justice allotted to them." As soon as the governor arrived at his palace, he communicated the sentence to, and held a council with, the criminal judge, concerning the manner of death to be inflicted on the criminals. Many nobles instantly hastened to the palaces of the Quirinal and the Vatican, to implore the grace of at least a private death for the ladies, and the pardon of the innocent Bernardo ; and, fortunately, they were in time to save the life of this youth, because many hours were necessarily employed in preparing the scaffold over the bridge of S. Angelo, and then in waiting for the Confraternity of Mercy, who were to accompany the condemned to the place of suffering.

The sentence was executed the morning of Saturday, the 11th of May. The messengers charged with the communication of the sentence, and the Brothers of the Conforteria, were sent to the several prisons at five the preceding night ; and at six the sentence of death was communicated to the unhappy brothers while they were placidly sleeping. Beatrice on hearing it broke into a piercing lamentation, and into passionate gesture, exclaiming, "How is it possible, O my God ! that I must so suddenly die ? " Lucretia, as prepared and already resigned to her fate, listened without terror to the reading of this terrible sentence ; and with gentle exhortations induced her daughter-in-law to enter the chapel with her ; and the latter, whatever excess she might have indulged in on the first intimation of a speedy death, so much the more now courageously supported herself, and gave every one certain proofs of a humble resignation. Having requested that a notary might be allowed to come to her, and her request being granted, she made her will, in which she left 15,000 crowns to the Fraternity of the Sacre Stimmate ;

and willed that all her dowry should be employed in portioning for marriage fifty maidens ; and Lucretia, imitating the example of her daughter-in-law, ordered that she should be buried in the church of S. Gregorio at Monte Celio, willed 32,000 crowns for charitable uses, and made other legacies ; after which they passed some time in the Conforteria, reciting psalms and litanies and other prayers, with so much fervor that it well appeared that they were assisted by the peculiar grace of God. At eight o'clock they confessed, heard mass, and received the holy communion. Beatrice, considering that it was not decorous to appear before the judges and on the scaffold with their splendid dresses, ordered two dresses, one for herself, and the other for her mother-in-law, made in the manner of the nuns — gathered up, and with long sleeves of black cotton for Lucretia, and of common silk for herself ; with a large cord girdle. When these dresses came, Beatrice rose, and, turning to Lucretia — "Mother," said she, "the hour of our departure is drawing near, let us dress therefore in these clothes, and let us mutually aid one another in this last office." Lucretia readily complied with this invitation, and they dressed, each helping the other, showing the same indifference and pleasure as if they were dressing for a feast.

The Company of Mercy arrived soon after at the prisons of the Tordinona ; and while they were waiting below in the street with the crucifix until the condemned should descend, an accident happened, which gave rise to such a tumult among the immense crowd there collected that there was danger of much disorder. It thus happened : some foreign gentlemen, who were posted at a high window, inadvertently threw down a flower-pot which was outside the window, which falling on one of the brothers of the Order of Mercy, mortally wounded him. This caused a disturbance in the crowd ; and those who were too far off to know the cause, took flight, and falling one over the other, several were wounded. When the tumult was calmed, the brothers Giacomo and Bernardo descended to the door of the prison, near which opportunely happened to be some fiscal officers, who, going up to Bernardo, told him that through the clem-

ency of the sovereign pontiff, his life was spared to him, with this condition, that he should be present at the death of his relations. A scarlet mantle trimmed with gold, in which he had at first been conducted to prison, was given him, to envelop him. Giacomo was already on the car, when the *placet* of the Pope arrived, freeing him from the severer portion of the punishment added to the sentence, and ordering that it should be executed only by the hammer and quartering.

The funereal procession passed through the Via dell' Orso, by the Apollinara, thence through the Piazza Navona ; from the church of S. Pantalio to the Piazza Pollarola, through the Campo di Fiori, S. Carlo a Castinari, to the Arco de' Conte Cenci ; proceeding, it stopped under the Palace Cenci, and then finally rested at the Corte Savella, to take the two ladies. When these arrived, Lucretia remained last, dressed in black, as has been described, with a veil of the same color, which covered her as far as her girdle ; Beatrice was beside her, also covered by a veil ; they wore velvet slippers, with silk roses and gold fastenings ; and, instead of manacles, their wrists were bound by a silk cord, which was fastened to their girdles in such a manner as to give them almost the free use of their hands. Each had in her left hand the holy sign of benediction, and in the right a handkerchief, with which Lucretia wiped her tears, and Beatrice the perspiration from her forehead. Being arrived at the place of punishment, Bernardo was left on the scaffold, and the others were conducted to the chapel. During this dreadful separation, this unfortunate youth, reflecting that he was soon going to behold the decapitation of his nearest relatives, fell down in a deadly swoon, from which, however, he was at last recovered, and seated opposite the block. The first that came forth to die was Lucretia, who, being fat, found difficulty in placing herself to receive the blow. The executioner taking off her handkerchief, her neck was discovered, which was still handsome, although she was fifty years of age. Blushing deeply, she cast her eyes down, and then, casting them up to heaven, full of tears, she exclaimed, "Behold, dearest Jesus, this guilty soul about to appear be-

fore thee — to give an account of its acts, mingled with many crimes. When it shall appear before thy Godhead, I pray thee to look on it with an eye of mercy, and not of justice." She then began to recite the psalm *Miserere mei Deus*, and placing her neck under the axe, the head was struck from her body while she was repeating the second verse of this psalm, at the words *et secundum multitudinem*. When the executioner raised the head, the populace saw with wonder that the countenance long retained its vivacity, until it was wrapped up in a black handkerchief, and placed in a corner of the scaffold. While the scaffold was being arranged for Beatrice, and whilst the Brotherhood returned to the chapel for her, the balcony of a shop filled with spectators fell, and five of those underneath were wounded, so that two died a few days after. Beatrice, hearing the noise, asked the executioner if her mother had died well, and it being replied that she had, she knelt before the crucifix, and spoke thus : — " Be thou everlastingly thanked, O my gracious Saviour, since, by the good death of my mother, thou hast given me assurance of thy mercy towards me." Then, rising, she courageously and devoutly walked towards the scaffold, repeating by the way several prayers with so much fervor of spirit, that all who heard her shed tears of compassion. Ascending the scaffold, while she arranged herself, she also turned her eyes to heaven, and thus prayed : — " Most beloved Jesus, who, relinquishing thy divinity, becamest a man ; and didst through love purge my sinful soul also of its original sin with thy precious blood ; deign, I beseech thee, to accept that which I am about to shed at thy most merciful tribunal, as a penalty which may cancel my many crimes, and spare me a part of that punishment justly due to me." Then she placed her head under the axe, which at one blow was divided from her body, as she was repeating the second verse of the psalm *De profundis*, at the words *fiant aures tuæ ;* the blow gave a violent motion to her body, and discomposed her dress. The executioner raised the head to the view of the people, and in placing it in the coffin placed underneath, the cord by which it was suspended slipped from his hold, and the head fell to the ground, shed-

ding a great deal of blood, which was wiped up with water and sponges.

On the death of his sister, Bernardo again fainted ; the most efficacious remedies were for some time uselessly employed upon him ; and it was believed by all that his second swoon, having found him already overcome and without strength, had deprived him of life. At length, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, he came to himself, and by slow degrees recovered the use of his senses. Giacomo was then conducted to the scaffold, and the executioner took from him the mourning cloak which enveloped him. He fixed his eyes on Bernardo, and then, turning, addressed the people with a loud voice : "Now that I am about to present myself before the Tribunal of infallible Truth, I swear that if my Saviour, pardoning me my faults, shall place me in the road to salvation, I will incessantly pray for the preservation of his Holiness, who has spared me the aggravation of punishment but too much due to my enormous crime, and has granted life to my brother Bernardo, who is most innocent of the guilt of parricide, as I have constantly declared in all my examinations. It only afflicts me in these my last moments that he should have been obliged to be present at so fatal a scene : but since, O my God, it has so pleased thee, *fiat voluntas tua*." After speaking thus, he knelt down ; the executioner blinded his eyes, and tied his legs to the scaffold, gave him a blow on the temple with a leaded hammer, cut off his head, and cut his body into four pieces which were fixed on the hooks of the scaffolding.

When the last penalty of justice was over, Bernardo was reconducted to the prison of the Tordinona, where he was soon attacked by a burning fever ; he was bled and received other remedies, so that in the end he recovered his health, though not without great suffering. The bodies of Lucretia and Beatrice were left at the end of the bridge until the evening, illuminated by two torches, and surrounded by so great a concourse of people that it was impossible to cross the bridge. An hour after dark, the body of Beatrice was placed in a coffin, covered by a black velvet pall, richly adorned with gold ; garlands of flowers were placed, one at

her head, and another at her feet ; and the body was strewed with flowers. It was accompanied to the church of S. Peter in Montorio by the Brotherhood of the Order of Mercy, and followed by many Franciscan monks, with great pomp and innumerable torches ; she was there buried before the high altar, after the customary ceremony had been performed. By reason of the distance of the church from the bridge, it was four hours after dark before the ceremony was finished. Afterwards the body of Lucretia, accompanied in the same manner, was carried to the church of S. Gregorio upon the Celian Hill, where, after the ceremony, it was honorably buried.

Beatrice was rather tall, of a fair complexion ; and she had a dimple on each cheek, which, especially when she smiled, added a grace to her lovely countenance that transported every one who beheld her. Her hair appeared like threads of gold ; and, because they were extremely long, she used to tie it up, and, when afterwards she loosened it, the splendid ringlets dazzled the eyes of the spectator. Her eyes were of a deep blue, pleasing, and full of fire. To all these beauties she added, both in words and actions, a spirit and a majestic vivacity that captivated every one. She was twenty years of age when she died.

Lucretia was as tall as Beatrice, but her full make made her appear less ; she was also fair, and so fresh complexioned, that at fifty, which was her age when she died, she did not appear above thirty. Her hair was black, and her teeth regular and white to an extraordinary degree.

Giacomo was of a middle size, fair but ruddy, and with black eyebrows ; affable in his nature, of good address, and well skilled in every science, and in all knightly exercises. He was not more than twenty-eight years of age when he died.

Lastly, Bernardo so closely resembled Beatrice in complexion, features, and everything else, that if they had changed clothes the one might easily have been taken for the other. His mind also seemed formed in the same model as that of his sister ; and at the time of her death he was six-and-twenty years old.

He remained in the prison of Tordinona until the month of September of the same year, after which time, at the intercession of the most Venerable Grand Brotherhood of the Most Holy Crucifix of St. Marcellus, he obtained the favor of his liberty upon paying the sum of 25,000 crowns to the Hospital of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims. Thus he, as the sole remnant of the Cenci family, became heir to all their possessions. He is now married, and has a son named Cristofero.

The most faithful portrait of Beatrice exists in the Palace of the Villa Pamfili, without the gate of San Pancrazio : if any other is to be found in the Palazzo Cenci, it is not shown to any one — so as not to renew the memory of so horrible an event.

This was the end of this family : and until the time when this account is put together it has not been possible to find the Marquis Paolo Santa Croce ; but there is a rumor that he dwells in Brescia, a city of the Venetian states.

[Rossetti (ii. 435) refers the student to Henri Beyle (de Stendhal), *Chroniques et Nouvelles*, for a parallel version of the story of the Cenci, and notes several points of disagreement with Shelley's *Relation*. A MS. volume, derived from London and marked " Date circa 1735, transcript from old Manuscript," which contains the narrative of the Cenci, with other Roman histories, is mentioned by a writer as possibly Shelley's original, in the *Rivista Italiana*, May 15, 1892, p. 1039. Medwin (*Life*, i. 345), refers to another MS. of the story, similarly bound up, in Genoa, and states that copies are common in Italian Libraries.]

Mrs. Shelley's Journal, April 22, 1819 : " Visit the Palazzo Corunna [Colonna] and see the picture of Beatrice Cenci." Mrs. Marshall, *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, i. 239 : [" A few days later (May 11) they wandered through the ancient dwelling of the Cenci family, a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture, in an obscure quarter of Rome, hard by the gate of the Ghetto. By May 14, as an entry in Mary's journal shows, Shelley was at work upon his tragedy." Dowden, ii. 277, 278.]

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, July, 1819 : [Printed above in Mrs. Shelley's note.]

Peacock, *Works*, iii. 435 : "He sent it to me to introduce it to Covent Garden Theatre. I did so, but the result was as I expected. It could not be received ; though great admiration was expressed of the author's powers, and great hopes of his success with a less repulsive subject. But he could not clip his wings to the littleness of the acting drama ; and though he adhered to his purpose of writing for the stage, and chose Charles I. for his subject, he did not make much progress in the task."

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, August 22 (?) 1819 : "My work on *The Cenci*, which was done in two months [the first draft was finished on August 8, Dowden, ii. 279] was a fine antidote to nervous medicines and kept up, I think, the pain in my side as sticks do a fire. Since then I have materially improved." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 465.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Hunt, September 3, 1819 : "I have written something and finished it, different from anything else, and a new attempt for me ; and I mean to dedicate it to you. I should not have done so without your approbation, but I asked your picture last night, and it smiled assent. If I did not think it in some degree worthy of you, I would not make you a public offering of it. I expect to have to write to you soon about it. If Ollier is not turned Christian, Jew, or become infected with *the Murrain*, he will publish it. Don't let him be frightened, for it is nothing which by any courtesy of language can be termed either moral or immoral." Hunt, *Lord Byron*, i. 392.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Ollier, September 6, 1819 : "I shall also send you another work, calculated to produce a very popular effect, and totally in a different style from anything I have yet composed. This will be sent already printed." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 119.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Miss Curran, August 5, 1819 : "I have nearly finished my *Cenci*, which Mary likes. I wish very much to get a good engraving made of the picture in the Colonna Palace, and to have the plate by the autumn. How much time and money would a first rate Roman artist demand for such a work ? Dare I ask you to add to the amount of so many favors, which must be long unrepaid, that

of charging yourself with such a kindness?" Dowden, *Life*, ii. 272, 273. [The cost was found to be beyond Shelley's means.]

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, September 9, 1819: "I send you the tragedy. You will see that the subject has not been treated as you suggested, and why it was not susceptible of such treatment. In fact, it was then already printing when I received your letter, and it has been treated in such a manner that I do not see how the subject forms an objection. You know *Œdipus* is performed on the fastidious French stage, a play much more broad than this. I confess I have some hopes, and some friends here persuade me that they are not unfounded." ["The *Œdipus* of Dryden and Lee was often performed in the last century; but never in my time. There is no subject of this class treated with such infinite skill and delicacy as in Alfieri's beautiful tragedy, *Mirra*. It was the character in which Madame Ristori achieved her great success in Paris; but she was prohibited from performing it in London. If the Covent Garden managers had accepted *The Cenci*, I doubt if the licenser would have permitted the performance." Peacock, *Note*], Peacock, *Works*, iii. 465, 466.

[*The Cenci* was performed privately in London by the Shelley Society in 1886, but on attempting to repeat the performance on August 4, 1892, Shelley's Centenary, such obstacles arose in obtaining a theatre that the project was abandoned.]

Mrs. Shelley (from Leghorn) to Miss Curran, September 18, 1819: "Shelley has finished his tragedy, and it is sent to London to be presented to the managers. It is still a *deep secret* and only one person, Peacock (who presents it), knows anything about it in England. With Shelley's public and private enemies, it would certainly fail if known to be his; his sister-in-law alone would hire enough people to damn it. It is written with great care, and we are in hopes that its story is sufficiently polished not to shock the audience. We shall see." Mrs. Marshall, *Life*, i. 256, 257.

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Peacock, September 21, 1819: "You will have received a short letter sent with the tragedy,

and the tragedy itself by this time. I am, you may believe, anxious to hear what you think of it, and how the manager talks about it. I have printed in Italy 250 copies, because it costs, with all duties and freightage, about half what it would cost in London, and these copies will be sent by sea. My other reason was a belief that the seeing it in print would enable the people at the theatre to judge more easily. . . . If my play should be accepted, don't you think it would excite some interest, and take off the unexpected horror of the story, by showing that the events are real, if it could be made to appear in some paper in some form? You will hear from me again shortly as I send you by sea the Cenci's printed, which you will be good enough to keep." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 466, 467.

Shelley (from Florence) to Mrs. Gisborne, October 13, 14 (?) 1819: "I had forgotten to say that I should be very much obliged to you, if you would contrive to send the Cenci's, which are at the printer's, to England, by the next ship. I forgot it in the hurry of departure. — I have just heard from P[eacock,] saying that he don't think that my tragedy will do, and that he don't much like it. But I ought to say, to blunt the edge of his criticism, that he is a nursling of the exact and superficial school in poetry. If Mr. G. is returned, send the *Prometheus* with them." Mrs. Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, ii. 235.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, October 15, 1819: "I am on the point of sending to you 250 copies of a work which I have printed in Italy, which you will have to pay four or five pounds duty upon, on my account. Hunt will tell you the *kind of thing* it is, and in the course of the winter I shall send directions for its publication, *until the arrival of which directions I request that you would have the kindness not* to open the box, *or, if by necessity it is opened, to abstain from observing yourself, or permitting others to observe, what it contains.* I trust this confidently to you, it being of consequence. Meanwhile, assure yourself that this work has no reference, direct or indirect, to politics, or religion, or personal satire, and that this precaution is merely literary." *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 120, 121.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, December 15, 1819: "When the box comes, you may write a note to Mr. Peacock, or it would be better to call on him and ask if *my tragedy is accepted?* If not, publish what you find in the box. I think it will succeed as a publication." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 123.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, March 6, 1820: "*Cenci* is written for the multitude, and ought to sell well." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 137. [This letter contains the passage ante, p. 438, directing Ollier how to obtain the box sent by sea.]

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, March 13, 1820: "My friends here have great hopes that *The Cenci* will succeed as a publication. It was refused at Drury Lane, although expressly written for theatrical exhibition, on a plea of the story being too horrible. I believe it singularly fitted for the stage." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 138. [Lady Shelley suggests, in a footnote, that "Drury Lane" is a slip of the pen for Covent Garden.]

Shelley (from Pisa) to Medwin, May 1, 1820: "I have just published a tragedy called *The Cenci*, and I see they have reprinted it at Paris at Galignani's. I dare say you will see the French edition, full of errors of course, at Geneva. The people from England tell me it is liked. It is dismal enough. My chief endeavor was to produce a delineation of passions which I had never participated in, in chaste language, and according to the rules of enlightened art. I don't think very much of it; but it is for you to judge." Trelawny, *Records*, ii. 35, 36.

Mrs. Shelley (from Leghorn) to Miss Curran, June 20, 1820: "How do you like *The Cenci?* It sells, you must know, of which I am very glad." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 142.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Medwin, July 20, 1820: "Your objection to *The Cenci* — as to the introduction of the name of God — is good, inasmuch as the play is addressed to a Protestant people; but *we* Catholics speak eternally and familiarly of the First Person of the Trinity, and, amongst *us*, religion is more interwoven with, and is less extraneous to, the system of ordinary life. As to Cenci's Curse, I know not whether I can defend it or no. I wish I may be able; and, as it often happens respecting the worst part of

an author's work, it is a particular favorite with me. I prided myself — as since your approbation I hope that I had just cause to do — upon the two concluding lines of the play. I confess I cannot approve of the squeamishness which excludes the exhibition of such *subjects* from the scene — a squeamishness the produce, as I firmly believe, of a lower tone of the public mind, and foreign to the majestic and confident wisdom of the golden age of our country." Trelawny, *Records*, ii. 37, 38.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Keats, July 27, 1820: "*The Cenci* I hope you have already received — it was studiously composed in a different style.

"'Below the *good* how far! but far above the *great*.'"

Westminster Review, April, 1841.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, January 20, 1821: "The reviews of my *Cenci* (though some of them, and especially that marked 'John Scott,' are written with great malignity) on the whole give me as much encouragement as a person of my habits of thinking is capable of receiving from such a source, which is, inasmuch as they coincide with, and confirm, my own decisions. My next attempt (if I should write more) will be a drama, in the composition of which I shall attend to the advice of my critics to a certain degree. But I doubt whether I *shall* write more. I could be content either with the Hell or the Paradise of poetry; but the torments of its Purgatory vex me without exciting my powers sufficiently to put an end to the vexation." *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 135, 136.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Peacock, February 15, 1821: "I am devising literary plans of some magnitude. But nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers; and if my play of *The Cenci* found none or few, I despair of ever producing anything that shall merit them." Peacock, *Works*, iii. 472.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, February 16, 1821: "Pray send me news of my intellectual children. . . . *The Cenci* ought to have been popular." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 153.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Hunt, August 26, 1821: "He [Byron] was loud . . . in censure of *The Cenci*. Certainly if *Marino Faliero* is a drama, *The Cenci* is not; but that is between ourselves." Hunt, *Lord Byron*, i. 406.

Trelawny, *Records* (i. 117): "In writing *The Cenci* my object was to see how I could succeed in describing passions I have never felt, and to tell the most dreadful story in pure and refined language. The image of Beatrice haunted me after seeing her portrait. The story is well authenticated, and the details far more horrible than I have painted them. *The Cenci* is a work of art; it is not colored by my feelings nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don't think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length."

Keats to Shelley, August 10, 1820: "I received a copy of *The Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of — the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have 'self-concentration' — selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards?" *Westminister Review*, April, 1841.

Horace Smith to Shelley, September 4, 1820 [printed ante, p. 439].

The Cenci was noticed in *The London Literary Gazette*, April 1, 1820, *The New Monthly Magazine*, May, 1820, *The London Magazine*, May, 1820, *The Indicator*, July 19, 26, 1820.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

The / Masque of Anarchy. / A Poem. / By Percy Bysshe Shelley. / Now first Published, with a Preface / By Leigh Hunt. / Hope is strong; / Justice and Truth their winged child have found. / Revolt of Islam. / London: / Edward Moxon, 64, New Bond Street. / 1832.

Collation: Octavo. Fly-title to *The Masque of Anarchy* (with blank verso), pp. i. ii.; Title (with blank verso), pp.

iii. iv. ; Preface, pp. v.–xxx. ; *The Masque of Anarchy*, pp. 1–47 (with imprint London : / Bradbury and Evans, Printers, / Bouverie Street, at foot of page). Moxon's Advertisements, 2 pp. Issued in boards, lettered Shelley's / Masque.

A nearly complete MS. is in the possession of Mr. T. J. Wise, being the one sent by Mrs. Shelley to Sir John Bowring, February 25, 1826, and has been issued in facsimile by the Shelley Society (*Publications Fourth Series, No. 1*). A transcript in Mrs. Shelley's hand sent to Hunt to print in the fall of 1819, is in the possession of Mr. Townshend Mayer, and is described by Forman in his edition. The poem is indexed in the Harvard MS., but the leaves are cut out.

NOTES showing the state of other editions and including minor variations beyond what has been already noted. 1839^2 follows 1839^1 in all cases, and both follow 1832 except as noted in the footnotes and below. The cancelings in the Hunt MS. are by Shelley.

iv. 2 *Lord* Hunt MS. cancelled, *Lord E* —— 1832. *Lord* is written in as a correction in the Wise MS., but being cancelled by Shelley in the Hunt MS. is rejected.
vi. 1 *Bible* starred 1832.
3 *Sidmouth* starred 1832.
ix. 2 *And in* Rossetti, Forman, Dowden.
3 *On* $1839^{1,2}$.
xiii. 1 *Over* Hunt MS. cancelled.
2 *the* all editions.
xv. 1 *For from . . .* Hunt MS. *For from . . . to meet him came* Wise MS.
xx. 2 *nightly* Rossetti, Forman.
xxx. 4 *and* all editions.
xxxiii 3–5 omit, Wise MS.
xxxvi. 4 *had cried* all editions.
xxxviii. 5 *Ye are many, they are few* 1839^1.
xlvi. 3 *wills* all editions.
l. 1–4 omit, Forman, Dowden.
lv. 4 *To* Rossetti, Dowden.

lviii. 4 *the* all editions.
lxiv. 4 *So serene they curse it not* Forman, Dowden.
lxxi. 4 *around ;* 1832.
lxxx. 4 *of an* Rossetti, Forman.

[The Manchester or Peterloo Massacre was occasioned by an attempt to hold a mass meeting on August 9, 1819, at St. Peter's Field, Manchester, in behalf of parliamentary reform. It was declared illegal and forbidden by the magistrates, and was in consequence postponed. It was held August 16, and attended by several thousands. The chief constable was ordered to arrest the ringleaders, and in particular the chairman, Henry Hunt, an agitator unconnected with Leigh Hunt. He asked military aid, and went accompanied by forty cavalrymen ; on the failure of the officer and his escort to penetrate the crowd which surrounded them, orders were given three hundred hussars to disperse the people ; in the charge six persons were killed, twenty or thirty received sabre wounds, and fifty or more were injured in other ways. Eldon was Lord High Chancellor, Sidmouth, Home Secretary, and Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary ; the government supported the authorities and publicly approved their conduct.]

Contemporary Records : —

Mrs. Shelley's Note (1839², p. 251) : " Though Shelley's first eager desire to excite his countrymen to resist openly the oppressions existent during 'the good old times' had faded with early youth, still his warmest sympathies were for the people. He was a republican, and loved a democracy. He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature, the necessaries of life, when fairly earned by labor, and intellectual instruction. His hatred of any despotism, that looked upon the people as not to be consulted or protected from want and ignorance, was intense. He was residing near Leghorn, at Villa Valsovano, writing *The Cenci*, when the news of the Manchester Massacre reached us ; it roused in him violent emotions of indignation and compassion. The

great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, as was shown some years after, made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist. Inspired by these feelings, he wrote *The Masque of Anarchy*, which he sent to his friend, Leigh Hunt, to be inserted in the *Examiner*, of which he was then the Editor.

" 'I did not insert it,' Leigh Hunt writes in his valuable and interesting preface to this poem, when he printed it in 1832, 'because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of his spirit, that walked in this flaming robe of verse.' Days of outrage have passed away, and with them the exasperation that would cause such an appeal to the many to be injurious. Without being aware of them, they at one time acted on his suggestions, and gained the day; but they rose when human life was respected by the minister in power; such was not the case during the administration which excited Shelley's abhorrence.

" The poem was written for the people, and is therefore in a more popular tone than usual; portions strike as abrupt and unpolished, but many stanzas are all his own. I heard him repeat, and admired those beginning, —

" ' My Father Time is old and gray,

before I knew to what poem they were to belong. But the most touching passage is that which describes the blessed effects of liberty; they might make a patriot of any man, whose heart was not wholly closed against his humbler fellow-creatures."

Shelley (from Leghorn) to Ollier, September 6, 1819: " The same day that your letter came, came the news of the Manchester work, and the torrent of my indignation has not yet done boiling in my veins. I wait anxiously to hear how the country will express its sense of this bloody, murderous oppression of its destroyers. 'Something must be done. What, yet I know not.' " [*The Cenci*, III. i. 86, 87] *Shelley Memorials*, p. 119.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Peacock, September 9, 1819: " Many thanks for your attention in sending the papers

which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester. These are, as it were, the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learned with equal docility! I still think there will be no coming to close quarters until financial affairs bring the oppressors and the oppressed together. Pray let me have the *earliest* political news which you consider of importance at this crisis." Forman, *Prose Works of Shelley*, iv. 123, 124. [Peacock, *Works*, iii. 465, omits some phrases.]

Shelley (from Pisa) to Peacock, September 21, 1819: "I have received all the papers you sent me, and the *Examiners* regularly, perfumed with muriatic acid. [By the Quarantine officials.] What an infernal business, — this of Manchester! What is to be done? Something assuredly. H. Hunt [Henry Hunt, Chairman of the Manchester Meeting, unconnected with Leigh Hunt] has behaved, I think, with great spirit and coolness in the whole affair." Forman, *Prose Works*, etc., iv. 124, 125. [Peacock, *Works*, iii. 467, omits some phrases.]

Shelley (from Florence) to Hunt, November, 1819: "You do not tell me whether you have received my lines on the Manchester affair. They are of the exoteric species, and are meant, not for the *Indicator*, but the *Examiner*. . . . I enclose you in this a piece for the *Examiner*, or let it share the fate, whatever that fate may be, of the *Mask of Anarchy*. . . . The great thing to do is to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy; to inculcate with fervor both the right of resistance and the duty of forbearance. You know my principles incite me to take all the good I can get in politics, forever aspiring to something more. I am one of those whom nothing will fully satisfy, but who are ready to be partially satisfied by all that is practicable. We shall see." Hunt, *Lord Byron*, i. 400–402.

Mrs. Shelley (from Kentish Town) to Sir John Bowring, February 25, 1826: "The longer poem I send was never published. It was called *The Mask of Anarchy*, and written in the first strong feelings excited by the cutting down of

the people at Manchester in 1819. *Facsimile of Shelley's MS.* p. 52.

PETER BELL THE THIRD

Peter Bell the Third was published by Mrs. Shelley, 1839², among the poems of 1819. Forman notes that a few lines (IV. ii. 3–5, vi. 1–4, V. xiv. 1–5) appeared as mottoes to chapters in Mrs. Shelley's *Lodore*, 1835. A rough draft exists among the Boscombe MSS. The variations in other editions, not already noted, are, in the Prologue, 10 *Aldric's* 1839², Forman, Dowden; and in III. ii. 2 *planning*, 1839², both misprints. Of the persons alluded to, *Thomas Brown, Esq., the Lounger, H. F.* is Moore, the name being his *nom de plume*, and *H. F.* standing conjecturally for Historian of the Fudges (Garnett) or *Hibernicæ Filius* (Rossetti); Castles (III. ii. 1) was a government spy (Rossetti) as was Oliver (VII. iv. 4) "prominent in the case of Brandreth, Turner and Ludlam, whose execution in 1817 inspired Shelley to write *The Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte*" (Forman); . . . (III. iii. 1) Forman conjectures to be Eldon. The passages of Wordsworth referred to are (*Note*, below) *The Excursion*, VIII. and (VI. xxxvi.) *Thanksgiving Ode on the Battle of Waterloo*, first version. Shelley put footnotes to the poem as follows: —

Prologue 36 The oldest scholiasts read —

A *dodecagamic* Potter.

This is at once more descriptive and more megalophonous, — but the alliteration of the text had captivated the vulgar ear of the herd of later commentators.

I. ii. 3 To those who have not duly appreciated the distinction between *Whale* and *Russia* oil, this attribute might rather seem to belong to the Dandy than the Evangelic. The effect, when to the windward, is indeed so similar, that it requires a subtle naturalist to discriminate the animals. They belong, however, to distinct genera.

III. viii. 2 One of the attributes in Linnæus's description of the Cat. To a similar cause the caterwauling of more than one species of this genus is to be referred; — except, indeed, that the poor quadruped is compelled to quarrel with its own pleasures, whilst the biped is supposed only to quarrel with those of others.

viii. 5 What would this husk and excuse for a virtue be without its kernel prostitution, or the kernel prostitution without this husk of a virtue? I wonder the women of the town do not form an association, like the Society for the Suppression of Vice, for the support of what may be called the "King, Church, and Constitution" of their order. But this subject is almost too horrible for a joke.

xvi. 1 This libel on our national oath, and this accusation of all our countrymen of being in the daily practice of solemnly asseverating the most enormous falsehood, I fear deserves the notice of a more active Attorney-General than that here alluded to.

VI. xi. 5 *Vox populi, vox dei.* As Mr. Godwin truly observes of a more famous saying, *of some merit as a popular maxim, but totally destitute of philosophical accuracy.*

xvi. 2 Quasi, *Qui valet verba:* — i. e. all the words which have been, are, or may be expended by, for, against, with, or on him. A sufficient proof of the utility of this history. Peter's progenitor who selected this name seems to have possessed *a pure anticipated cognition* of the nature and modesty of this ornament of his posterity.

xxv. 5 A famous river in the New Atlantis of the Dynastophylic Pantisocratists.

xxvi. 5 See the description of the beautiful colors produced during the agonizing death of a

number of trout, in the fourth part of a long poem in blank verse, published within a few years. That poem contains curious evidence of the gradual hardening of a strong but circumscribed sensibility, of the perversion of a penetrating but panic-stricken understanding. The author might have derived a lesson which he had probably forgotten from these sweet and sublime verses.

> This lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
> Taught both by what she[1] shows and what conceals,
> Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

VI. xxxviii. 6 It is curious to observe how often extremes meet. Cobbett and Peter use the same language for a different purpose : Peter is indeed a sort of metrical Cobbett. Cobbett is, however, more mischievous than Peter, because he pollutes a holy and now unconquerable cause with the principles of legitimate murder ; whilst the other only makes a bad one ridiculous and odious. If either Peter or Cobbett should see this note, each will feel more indignation at being compared to the other than at any censure implied in the moral perversion laid to their charge.

Contemporary Records : —

Mrs. Shelley's Note (1839[2], p. 253): "A critique on Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* reached us at Leghorn, which amused Shelley exceedingly and suggested this poem. I need scarcely observe that nothing personal to the Author of *Peter Bell* is intended in this poem. No man ever admired Wordsworth's poetry more ; — he read it perpetually,

[1] Nature.

and taught others to appreciate its beauties. This poem is, like all others written by Shelley, ideal. He conceived the idealism of a poet — a man of lofty and creative genius — quitting the glorious calling of discovering and announcing the beautiful and good, to support and propagate ignorant prejudices and pernicious errors ; imparting to the unenlightened, not that ardor for truth and spirit of toleration which Shelley looked on as the sources of the moral improvement and happiness of mankind ; but false and injurious opinions, that evil was good, and that ignorance and force were the best allies of purity and virtue. His idea was that a man gifted even as transcendently as the Author of *Peter Bell*, with the highest qualities of genius, must, if he fostered such errors, be infected with dulness. This poem was written, as a warning — not as a narration of the reality. He was unacquainted personally with Wordsworth or with Coleridge (to whom he alludes in the fifth part of the poem), and therefore, I repeat, his poem is purely ideal ; — it contains something of criticism on the compositions of these great poets, but nothing injurious to the men themselves.

"No poem contains more of Shelley's peculiar views, with regard to the errors into which many of the wisest have fallen, and of the pernicious effects of certain opinions on society. Much of it is beautifully written — and though, like the burlesque drama of Swellfoot, it must be looked on as a plaything, it has so much merit and poetry — so much of *himself* in it, that it cannot fail to interest greatly, and by right belongs to the world for whose instruction and benefit it was written."

[The "critique" mentioned in this note refers, it is thought, to the two reviews in Hunt's *Examiner* on Reynolds's and on Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*, as stated in the note prefixed to the text, to which there is little to add. The date of composition, "the latter days of October," is given by Dowden, ii. 289. Forman reprints, besides Reynolds's satire, *Peter Bell* vs. *Peter Bell* from Reynolds's *The Fancy*, 1820. See, also, note on the *Sonnet to Wordsworth*.]

Shelley (from Florence) to Hunt, November 2, 1819 :

"Now, I only send you a *very heroic* poem, which I wish you to give to Ollier, and desire him to print and publish immediately, you being kind enough to take upon yourself the correction of the press — not, however, with my name ; and you must tell Ollier that the author is to be kept a secret, and that I confide in him for this object as I would confide in a physician or lawyer, or any other man whose professional situation renders the betraying of what is entrusted a dishonor. My motive in this is solely not to prejudge myself in the present moment, as I have only expended a few days in this party squib, and, of course, taken little pains. The verses and language I have let come as they would, and I am about to publish more serious things this winter ; afterwards, that is next year, if the thing should be remembered so long, I have no objection to the author being known, but *not now*. I should like well enough that it should both go to press and be printed very quickly ; as more serious things are on the eve of engaging both the public attention and mine. . . . She [Mary] has written out, as you will observe, *my* Peter." Garnett, *Relics*, pp. 103, 104.

Shelley (from Florence) to Ollier, December 15, 1819 : "Pray what have you done with *Peter Bell?* Ask Mr. Hunt for it, and for some other poems of a similar character I sent him to give you to publish. I think *Peter* not bad in his way ; but perhaps no one will believe in anything in the shape of a joke from me." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 123.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, May 14, 1820 : "If *Peter Bell* be printed (you can best judge if it will sell or no, and there would be no other reason for printing such a trifle) attend, I pray you, particularly to completely concealing the author ; and for *Emma* read *Betty* as the name of *Peter's* sister. Emma, I recollect, is the real name of the sister of a great poet who might be mistaken for *Peter*." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 139.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

The Witch of Atlas is the second title in the *Posthumous Poems*, 1824. The Dedication is there omitted, and was first published in 1839[1], together with a note explaining it. A

MS. exists at Boscombe, and a transcript by Mrs. Shelley, found among the Hunt papers, is in the possession of Mr. Townshend Mayer.

NOTES showing the state of other texts and including minor variations beyond what has been already noted. 1839[1,2] agree, and follow 1824, except where variations are noted.

vi. 1 *cameleopard* all editions and transcript.
xv. 1 *lay* omit, transcript.
xxi. 1 *own* omit, 1839[1,2].
xxvi. 1 *sat* 1824, Rossetti.
xxxvi. 5 *swelled lightly* Forman, Dowden.
xxxvii. 3 *lightenings* 1839[1,2], Rossetti, Dowden.
xlvi. 1 dele comma 1839[1,2], Forman, Dowden; *flashed*, — Rossetti. *Sunlight*, 1824, Rossetti.
lxxv. 3 *Around the anvils* Forman conj.

CONTEMPORARY RECORDS : —

Mrs. Shelley's Note, 1839[1], iv. 50–53 : "We spent the summer at the baths of San Giuliano, four miles from Pisa. These baths were of great use to Shelley in soothing his nervous irritability. We made several excursions in the neighborhood. The country around is fertile, and diversified and rendered picturesque by ranges of near hills and more distant mountains. The peasantry are a handsome, intelligent race, and there was a gladsome sunny heaven spread over us, that rendered home and every scene we visited cheerful and bright. During some of the hottest days of August, Shelley made a solitary journey on foot to the summit of Monte San Pelegrino — a mountain of some height, on the top of which there is a chapel, the object, during certain days in the year, of many pilgrimages. The excursion delighted him while it lasted, though he exerted himself too much, and the effect was considerable lassitude and weakness on his return. During the expedition he conceived the idea and wrote, in the three days immediately succeeding to his return, *The Witch of Atlas*. This poem is peculiarly characteristic of his tastes — wildly fanciful, full of brilliant

imagery, and discarding human interest and passion, to revel in the fantastic ideas that his imagination suggested.

"The surpassing excellence of *The Cenci* had made me greatly desire that Shelley should increase his popularity, by adopting subjects that would more suit the popular taste than a poem conceived in the abstract and dreamy spirit of *The Witch of Atlas*. It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame ; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavors. The few stanzas that precede the poem were addressed to me on my representing these ideas to him. Even now I believe that I was in the right. Shelley did not expect sympathy and approbation from the public ; but the want of it took away a portion of the ardor that ought to have sustained him while writing. He was thrown on his own resources and on the inspiration of his own soul, and wrote because his mind overflowed, without the hope of being appreciated. I had not the most distant wish that he should truckle in opinion, or submit his lofty aspirations for the human race to the low ambition and pride of the many, but I felt sure that if his poems were more addressed to the common feelings of men, his proper rank among the writers of the day would be acknowledged ; and that popularity as a poet would enable his countrymen to do justice to his character and virtues ; which, in those days, it was the mode to attack with the most flagitious calumnies and insulting abuse. That he felt these things deeply cannot be doubted, though he armed himself with the consciousness of acting from a lofty and heroic sense of right. The truth burst from his heart sometimes in solitude, and he would write a few unfinished verses that showed that he felt the sting. . . .

"I believed that all this morbid feeling would vanish, if the chord of sympathy between him and his countrymen were touched. But my persuasions were vain ; the mind could not be bent from its natural inclination. Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet. Such opened again the wounds of his own heart, and he loved to

shelter himself rather in the airiest flights of fancy, forgetting love and hate and regret and lost hope, in such imaginations as borrowed their hues from sunrise or sunset, from the yellow moonshine or paly twilight, from the aspect of the far ocean or the shadows of the woods ; which celebrated the singing of the winds among the pines, the flow of a murmuring stream, and the thousand harmonious sounds which nature creates in her solitudes. These are the materials which form *The Witch of Atlas ;* it is a brilliant congregation of ideas, such as his senses gathered, and his fancy colored, during his rambles in the sunny land he so much loved."

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, January 20, 1821 : "I send you *The Witch of Atlas*, a fanciful poem, which, if its merit be measured by the labor which it cost, is worth nothing." *Shelley Memorials*, 135.

Shelley (from Pisa) to Ollier, February 22, 1821 : "Do not add *The Witch of Atlas* to that peculiar piece of writing [Julian and Maddalo] ; you may put my name to *The Witch of Atlas* as usual." *Shelley Memorials*, p. 154.

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